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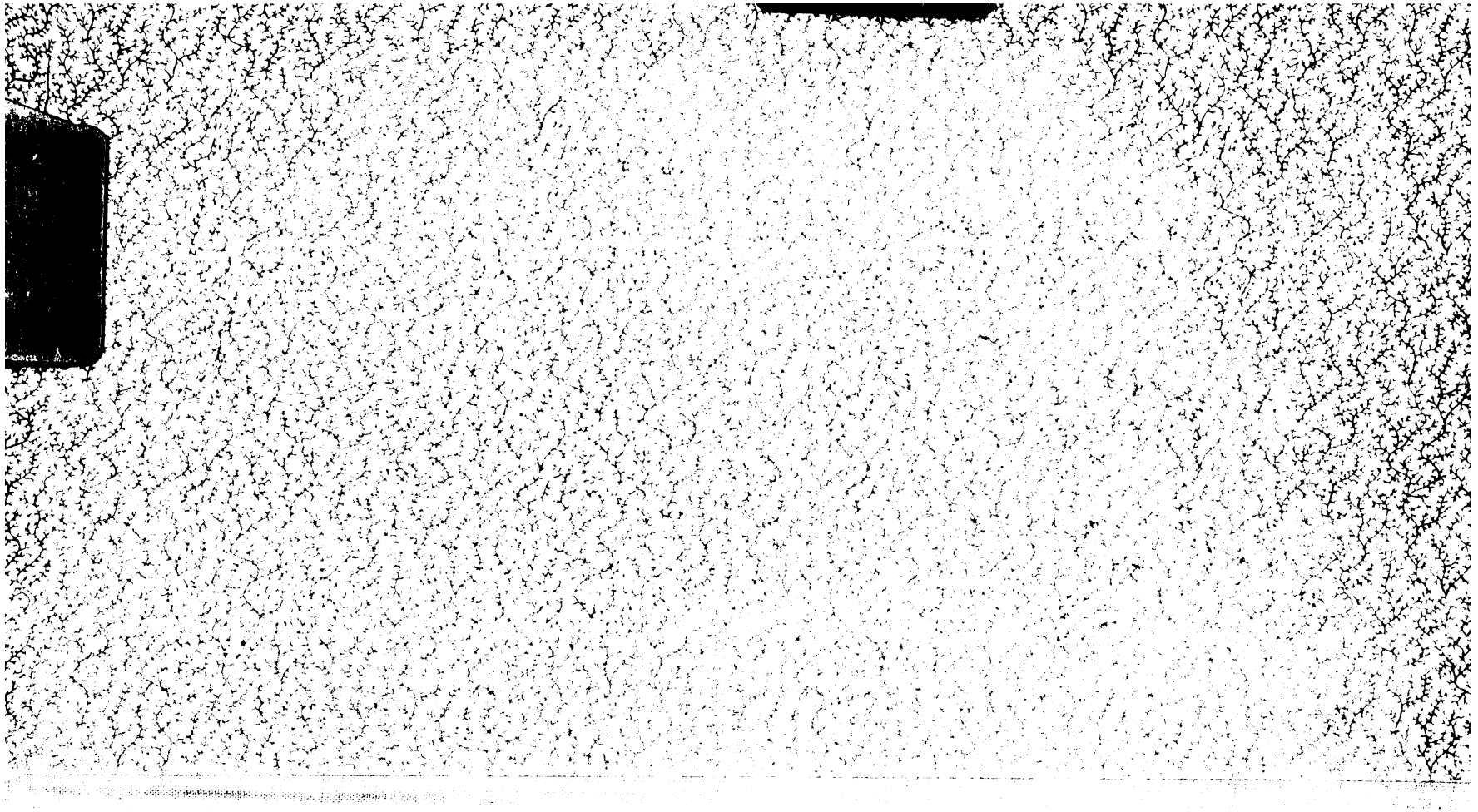

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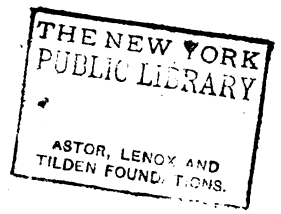

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THE

# TRAGEDIES

OF

## MADDALEN, AGAMEMNON,

## Lady Macbeth,

## ANTONIA & CLYTEMNESTRA.

---

BY JOHN GALT.

---

"Se ella è nato per fare tragedie, il suo sará o peggiore o migliore od uguale."—ALFIERI.

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LONDON:

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# PREFACE.

THESE Dramas are the sketches of pastime, and as such are offered to the public. MADDALEN was written in the Lazzaretto of Messina, to lighten the captivity of quarantine; CLYTEMNESTRA during a passage from Sardinia to Gibraltar; AGAMEMNON in the course of my voyage from that fortress to Ireland; ANTONIA, while obliged to perform a second quarantine in Cork harbour; and LADY MACBETH, at subsequent intervals, when I could contrive no better way of employing my attention. In compositions so hasty, polished correctness ought not to be expected. I think it would be easier to write others than to make these more worthy of perusal, by any application which I might exert; and I have printed them, because I do not think that they ought to be destroyed.

But although negligence of language be pardonable, the manner and subjects may provoke animadversion; and the names of AGAMEMNON, LADY MACBETH and CLYTEMNESTRA, are calculated to occasion mortifying comparisons. With respect to the style, I consider the characteristics of the British dramatic verse as having been fixed by Shakespear; and his successors, in my opinion, would shew as bad a taste in attempting to introduce a new manner, as in imitating the obsolete quaintness peculiar to the writers of his age. I have, therefore, endeavoured to adapt his simple and colloquial metres to modern modes of expression. But in the structure of the drama, I have ventured to preserve the unities of the Greek theatre, along with the natural circumstances and dialogue of the English; and I have chosen to divide the fable into three parts, (I know not why five should have been hitherto preferred,) and my text will be found to indicate without the aid of marginal notes, what should be the business of the stage. Whether these are actually improvements, experience must decide.

For the manner in which I have treated the often-rehearsed stories of AGAMEMNON and CLYTEMNESTRA, I make no apology. The former is a

gross and detestable topic; and the latter is so truly horrible, that to have managed either without disgusting, will be no inconsiderable praise. The greatest poets have written on these subjects; and The ELECTRA of Sophocles is a hideous and inhuman exhibition.

For presuming to meddle with the awful mysteries of MACBETH, I have not one word to offer in extenuation. I thought the almost satanic character of the Lady, possessed traits of grandeur which might be so represented as to excite compassion; and the frame of Macbeth's mind afforded me an opportunity of introducing allusions to Scottish superstitions which Shakespear has not touched; and which are still, in a great measure, new to the poetry of the stage. The play is, in fact, an experiment; and as such, I wrote it with some degree of audacity both in thought and phraseology. It is the best or the worst in the volume.

With regard to the other two pieces, MADDALEN and ANTONIA; the first was undertaken to try whither such a person as the Dutchess, a character of meaner energies than the generality of those on whom the interest of the solemn drama

is supposed essentially to depend, might be rendered capable of exciting a tragical degree of pathetic sympathy; and the second seemed to afford scope for new situations, and the means of embodying a class of observations, which, though not sufficiently popular for the stage, could only be intelligibly expressed in dramatic circumstances.

*London*, 19*th April*, 1812.

ERRATA.—Page 4, line 5, for *bedeck't* read *bedeck'd*; page 37, for *Scene V.* read *Scene IX.*; page 35, line 4, for *Approbrious* read *Opprobrious*; page 58, line 9, for *approbrious* read *opprobrious*; page 82, line 4, for *threats* read *throats*; page 99, line 14, for *gratitude* read *ingratitude*; page 120, line 7, for *falsely, sad adorn'd* read *falsely sad, adorn'd*; page 123, line 13, for *Firth* read *Forth*; page 130, line 22, for *alm* read *alms*; page 139, line 9, for *heart* read *breast*; page 177, line 12, for *porticos* read *portico*.

# MADDALEN,

A

# TRAGEDY.

# CHARACTERS.

VALDINI.
LORENZO.
DUKE.

MADDALEN.
DUTCHESS.

*The Stage represents a Saloon.*

# MADDALEN.

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

MADDALEN.

O wretched me! O dismal wedding day!
Break fated heart, and rather to the tomb
Let me be borne than to the bridal bed,
Incestuous to my soul. Valdini's wife!
Wife to the father of my lov'd Lorenzo!—
The sworn accepted husband of my heart.
What dire delusion drew me on to this?
Knew I not well my uncle's ruthless mind?
How could I hope, or on despair rely?
O deadly apathy! O mortal hour,
In which I put these gaudy trappings on,
And gave my hand. This faithless hand, so oft'
The glowing record of Lorenzo's passion,
Is to his father pledg'd, for love, for faith,
For all that ere I cherish'd for Lorenzo.
Ah hapless son! son? mine? my lover mine!

## SCENE II.

MADDALEN *and* LORENZO.

MADDALEN.

Ha! Lorenzo!

LORENZO.

You here! O Maddalen!

MADDALEN.

Leave me, go, go.—

LORENZO.

Ah rather on thy bier,
Unhappy fair, would I have seen thee laid,
Than with this bridal garnishing bedeck't.

MADDALEN.

Despise, upbraid me; but in harsher terms,
That I may learn to be your step-mother.—
Recount my perjuries; recall the scenes,
Where we in childhood, innocent and free,
As th' infant Cupid on his bed of flowers,
Lov'd without knowing Love. Or if you think,
My fickle heart will scorn the baby-tale,
Describe some transport of our warmer passion.—
Paint the secluded bower where last we met,
While all the mild and blushing western sky,
Glow'd like the flame of Love's delightful torch,
And my fond heart, first, felt thy bosom beat.

LORENZO.

O Maddalen, my ever dear adored.

MADDALEN.

Horror! avaunt! this is thy father's hand.

## SCENE III.

LORENZO.

In what strange chaos do I find myself?
The film of flax is stronger in the flame,
Than all my resolutions in her presence.
Why stay I ling'ring and resolving still?
To me she cannot be unmarried; never!
Sure some fatality abhorred detains me;
Some devil plotting for my better part.

## SCENE IV.

VALDINI *and* LORENZO.

VALDINI.

Lorenzo! how is this? still sad, still thoughtful.
Since first I told you I had fixt to marry,
Your face has chang'd, and with a slighting eye
You oft, too pettishly, have heard and noted,
Those preparations, not extravagant,
Which our condition claims for such events.
And know you not the marriage is perform'd?

LORENZO.

I do, my Lord.

VALDINI.

Politeness might have taught,
At least, to feign a joy for the occasion.
I did expect a little more from you.
'Tis true I am your father.—

LORENZO.

O my Lord!

VALDINI.

And step-mother's are often bad enough;
But you are not a child; and, as I hope,
My wife has qualities that you may love.
I have inform'd you, that, in early youth,
My heart was pledg'd to Maddalena's mother,
But victims, at the shrine of family pride,
We both were sacrificed. I went, abroad,
Soon after my espousal of your mother;
Who, had she liv'd, might have redeem'd my heart.
She died in giving birth to you.

LORENZO.

My Lord!

VALDINI.

Her ample dowery, great beyond my wants,
With just economy for you I nursed;
And now I come to render my account,
With the full rights, estates, and moveables.
I ever held them but as family trusts,
Although they cost me all my youthful hopes.

Think not the offspring of a second bed,
Shall touch one tittle that to you belongs.

LORENZO.

O my good Lord! my truly noble father!
You know me not. Of small import to me,
Are these vile documents of ill-starr'd love.
Keep them, and with them all that they convey,
For some more happy progeny.

VALDINI.

My dear Lorenzo! you perplex me much.
What is this grief that presses down your mind?
'Tis not my marriage then that vexes you?
What mean you? speak?

LORENZO.

'Tis now, alas, too late!

## SCENE V.

DUTCHESS *and* VALDINI.

DUTCHESS.

Joy! joy, my Lord! how does my Lady niece?
But why alone? True lovers, fresh like you,
Should be at other sport. Tut, musty parchments!
Go; go and rustle silks. Where's my sweetheart?

VALDINI.

Whom?

DUTCHESS.

Don Lorenzo, my dear nephew now.
O! how I long to tease the snappish dog,
He used to turn on me so snarling.

VALDINI.

Why?

DUTCHESS.

I took such pleasure to disturb his wooing.

VALDINI.

Wooing!

DUTCHESS.

Desperate wooing. O he was mad!
Mad as Leander, who across the sea
Swam every night, while Ero, cunning toad,
Stood at th' uncurtain'd window with a light,
His polar star, the pharos of his port!
But love, sweet love, makes conjurors of all.

VALDINI.

I never heard of Don Lorenzo's passion!

DUTCHESS.

No! How delightful! but the Duke is here;
And he has grown so stern and sour of late,
That I am scarcely free to breathe with him.
I'll to the bride and feel her palpitations.

## SCENE VI.

DUKE *and* VALDINI.

DUKE.

Bridegroom?

VALDINI.

Well!

DUKE.

Grave! with solemn parchments too!
Strange occupation for your wedding-day.—
My prattling Dutchess has been teasing?

VALDINI.

No.
Her Grace is gaily hearted, and delights
To catch the flying pleasures as they pass.
But she has told me news.

DUKE.

I hope not bad?

VALDINI.

Not, certainly, as she appears to think.
Has e'er your Grace heard of Lorenzo's passion?

DUKE.

Passion, my Lord! what passion?

VALDINI.

Love.

DUKE.

For whom?

VALDINI.

As yet I have not heard, but much I fear—

DUKE.

'Tis a conceit of her's—give it no heed.

VALDINI.

But I have seen my son thoughtful and sad.

DUKE.

*(Fool that I was, not to prepare for this.)*

VALDINI.

My Lord?

DUKE.

My Lord?

VALDINI.

I thought your Grace had spoken.

DUKE.

I said it must be some slight flame. With whom?

VALDINI.

I, rather, fear 'tis an unworthy charm,
Something his reason blushes to disclose.
And yet he is not one of that complexion.
I know him—just, high-minded and topful
Of noble magnanimity—all that
Becomes his birth and splendid expectation.

DUKE.

Such often err a little from the straight.

VALDINI.

True! but the errant ever show some glimpse
Of livelier spirit than Lorenzo bears.
A mild, a temperate virtue, meek but firm,
Pervades his gen'rous nature. I am vext,
And will to-morrow question him myself.

DUKE.

My wife was gossiping to tell you this.

VALDINI.

Not so, my Lord; 'twas in her sprightly way,
And but for something, troubled and distress'd,
Which I had noticed in Lorenzo's mind,
I should have, lightly, pass'd her Grace's wit.—
He has refused to take his mother's dower.

DUKE.

How?

VALDINI.

He has.

DUKE.

You then have offer'd it?

VALDINI.

All.

DUKE.

Money and Estates?

VALDINI.

Yes: all I possess'd.

DUKE.

How meant you then to keep your own degree?

VALDINI.

My pensions, recompence of faithful service,
And the small relic that has still been spared,
By a long line of wasteful prodigals,
Make yet enough for a philosopher.

DUKE.

But for my neice?

VALDINI.

My wife, I trust, will learn
On better ground to build her happiness,
Than fleeting wealth affords. Your Grace knows well,
How slight a tenure, in this changeful age,
We hold for all that makes us what we are.

DUKE.

She had been better with your son.

VALDINI.

My Lord!—
To-day, from you, I can take no offence.
If wealth was all her aim—Lorenzo's wealth,
Doubtless, surpasses mine an hundred fold.

DUKE.

He too is young, her match in years.

VALDINI.

Well, well,
Let all that pass, the marriage now is o'er.
Your pardon, 'till I put these papers by.

## SCENE VII.

DUKE.

What have I done? Who could have fancied this?
I thought the Count had been a man of sense!
To live so long in the great world of courts;

To deal and traffic with the bought and sold,
And ever too with most renown'd success;
And yet to talk like a romantic youth!—
A very boy o'er his poetic scrawls,
Could not have feign'd a wilder flight than this.
O! how have I been so beside myself?
To trust this fool of nature, and to give
Him due and credence for the fame he bears:
A fame obtain'd by fortune's accidents!—
Dolt that I was, not to suspect his weakness.
And I have sacrificed poor Maddalen!

## SCENE VIII.

DUTCHESS *and* DUKE.

DUTCHESS.

Fine work! fine work! a merry wedding-day!
The bridgroom here, with parchments in his hand,
Majestically grave: the bride, forlorn,
There, with a handkerchief dejected sits,
Wiping away her final virgin tears.
Were she in process of a lewd divorce,
Caught in the fact, she could not sob it more.

DUKE.

Your silly meddling and unruly tongue,
Is ever breeding trouble. What is this,
That you have loosely chattered to the Count?

DUTCHESS.

O! to be sure, all that mishaps is mine!
I put the odious parchments in his hand,
I put the dismal handkerchief in her's.

DUKE.

Woman! no more of this! Hear my firm will.
Never again speak you that e'er between
The Countess and her son, Lorenzo. Mark!

DUTCHESS.

Her son!

DUKE.

Ought pass'd but such as freely may,
In mixt assembly, pass with laugh and freak
Of youthful gaiety. Mind nothing more.

DUTCHESS.

O heart of me! I always thought no good
Could come of their nocturnal whisperings.
But lovers will be lovers, certain sure.

DUKE.

There is more hazard in your giddy head,
Than in your foolish tongue.

DUTCHESS.

Good words my Lord.
I'll be as silent as your ancestors,
Ay, where they sit upon their monuments,
In what concerns the honour of our house.—
I'll to her instantly and tax her with 't.

DUKE.

Heav'ns and earth! the woman is possess'd!
But here Lorenzo comes, let us be calm.

DUTCHESS.

In truth, a handsome portly youth to see;
A pleasant vision to a lady's eye.

## SCENE IX.

LORENZO, DUKE, *and* DUTCHESS.

LORENZO.

I thought the Count, my father, had been here.

DUKE.

He just has stepp'd into his closet. Well!
And so, Lorenzo, you refuse to take
Your mother's princely dower?

DUTCHESS.

Have I my ears?

LORENZO.

Doubtless, my Lord, 'tis much to your content.

DUKE.

Could I have but devined the Count's—

LORENZO.

No more!
No more of that! What is done, is.—

DUTCHESS.

Poor youth!

LORENZO.

The fortune all shall yet be Maddalen's—
Her children yet shall have their mother's price.

DUTCHESS.

Hark ye! some one of them may be your own.

LORENZO.

Ha! what malignant fiend predicts to thee?

## SCENE X.

DUKE *and* LORENZO.

DUKE.

What said the Dutchess?

LORENZO.

Wretch!

DUKE.

How now? What's this?

LORENZO.

Yes, sordid wretch! Curs'd trafficker in hearts,
When thou art damn'd, be it thy punishment
To writhe in molten gold.

DUKE.

Sure he is mad!

LORENZO.

Had I but told my father, trusted him,
His noble nature would have sav'd us all.
O fatal diffidence! O deadly doubt!
O hesitation that decides too late!

DUKE.

I can no longer, sir! brook this contempt.

LORENZO.

Contempt! no; abhorrence, triple accurs'd!
The loathsome toad, with its foul speckled breast,
Is less detestable than thou art, wretch!
With thy crime-spotted soul.

DUKE.

Draw, draw, I say!

LORENZO.

Would'st thou to hell so soon?

DUKE.

Draw, villain! draw!

LORENZO.

Villain from thee!—Villain! put up thy sword.

DUKE.

I will, I will.

LORENZO.

Ay do: go use thy purse.

## SCENE XI.

LORENZO.

Here I am not myself: each petty word
That bears allusion to my former state,
Like the small spark that fires a magazine,
With terrible combustion fills my breast.—

To-morrow—yes, to-morrow, I will go.
But if so soon, what will my father think?
And yet, he must not know the painful cause.
The sacrifice is made! Then let not me,
By wild temerity, make worse the ill.
No: but the rather, all that in me lies,
Use for a happier aim—again the Dutchess.

## SCENE XII.

DUTCHESS *and* LORENZO.

DUTCHESS.

Lorenzo! is the Duke gone hence, Lorenzo?

LORENZO.

Yes. Well?

DUTCHESS.

Come, come, we shall be friends again.

LORENZO.

*(A garrulous good-hearted soul.)* We shall.—
Pardon my fury.

DUTCHESS.

Never speak of it.
Between ourselves, the Duke's a—I know what.
He is so gruff and turkish in his way,
By Mary, Virgin, I am more his slave
Than his true Dutchess, wedded by the hand.
'Tis all his doing, this dull wedding-day.

LORENZO.

Most true it is.

DUTCHESS.

No joke, no revelry.
I might, as well, have come in weeds of woe,
As in my jewels, and this gay brockade,
Bought purposely. See this delightful flounce!
My own device! No respite, day nor night,
I gave th' embroid'rer till it was complete.
Behold what it has come to! Heaven look to't!
But solemn visages and wat'ry eyes,
Are dismal omens on a wedding-day.
And lo! the bride, dull as the moon eclips'd.

## SCENE XIII.

MADDALEN *and* DUTCHESS.

MADDALEN.

Your grace alone!

DUTCHESS.

No: here!—Why, what is this?
As I have soul in me, the world's depraved;
All courtesy and gentle manners gone,
And weddings held as sad obsequies.
Here was I standing, as I thought I was;
Holding a chat in pleasant negligence
With Don Lorenzo. But, he, like a ghost,
A vapoury ghost, has vanish'd into air.—

Well! by my troth, I have good cause to fret.
Snubb'd and brow-beaten when I would make mirth,—
As little heeded as a cuckoo clock.
I may, as well, at once, go say my prayers.

MADDALEN.

Truly, dear aunt, all inauspicious lowers.
In vain, in vain, I would my heart controul,
But still some dire tempestuous thought succeeds,
And whirls me to despair.

DUTCHESS.

It is not wise
To think so much, now that your knell is rung.

MADDALEN.

O hopeless me! it was, indeed, my knell.

DUTCHESS.

Go to, go to.—Catch not my words so sadly.
You're not the first, as I could tell myself,
That has been worried from her own true love.
But thank your stars, since they would have it so,
That you have got a husband, gracious, noble;
A man, who, but to say the least of him,
Is worth ten thousand dukes; and then his son—

MADDALEN.

Ah! name him not, let me forget him now.
O idle wish, that only serves to bring
His darling image warmer to my heart.

DUTCHESS.

Fye! These obstrep'rous fits become you ill.
He was your lover: dangled here and there,
Made piteous sonnets to your smiles and tears;
Danc'd with you, laugh'd with you, and if 'twere known,
Perhaps, a score or two of kisses stole.
The world is old, and such things are not new:
Come, pass them by, and think of other cheer.—
I have got news that will content your heart.

MADDALEN.

Alas, to me, all tidings are alike.
My part and int'rest in this world is done.

DUTCHESS.

Lorenzo—

MADDALEN.

Dearest, ever worshipp'd, name,
Be thou the word of courage to my soul,
In the great enterprize that I have sworn.

DUTCHESS.

Tut, tut, niece! you displease me much.—No more.
You know his mother's wealth and large estates,
Without restraint, were to his father given.

MADDALEN.

For them, I know that I was sold and doomed.

DUTCHESS.

Well! who could think, what the good count has done?
Resign'd them all to him!

MADDALEN.

What! to Lorenzo?

DUTCHESS.

All!

MADDALEN.

Just, noble, father! Now what says the duke?
What says the bargainer? My brain is fired.

DUTCHESS.

But not one florin will Lorenzo touch,
So all is safe. What means this hideous laugh?
Heav'ns! are ye sane? Why do ye glare at me?
O! I am terrified.—Niece! Maddalen!
O my sweet Maddalen! help!—

MADDALEN.

Hush! there's none.

# ACT II.

## SCENE I.

VALDINI *and* LORENZO.

VALDINI.

I ask no more; convinc'd that this decision,
Springs from just cause for manly resolution;
That prudence also dictates to conceal.
But when do you depart?

LORENZO.

To-morrow.

VALDINI.

How!
So soon! to-morrow?

LORENZO.

Speedily, I mean.
I should say, rather, in a day or two.

VALDINI.

Lorenzo! Is there danger in delay?

LORENZO.

My lord!

VALDINI.

Reserve: I cannot then approve,
When evil falls, and you see all its scope,
Trust to the native courage of your breast,
And such auxiliar aid as chance may send

To master the misfortune: trust yourself,
And trust your destiny; for such begets,
That self possession which endures the shock
Of rough adversity, and lifts the man
Above the waves and currents of the time.
But when the matter hangs in dread, and may,
By strength or enterprize, be yet repell'd,
Then call your friends, take counsel, and take aid.

LORENZO.

But when the fear in our own frailty lies?

VALDINI.

*('Tis so.)*

LORENZO.

*(What have I said? he seems disturb'd.)*

VALDINI.

The dutchess told me, in her merry way,
That you have been in love.

LORENZO.

My lord! my lord!

VALDINI.

Be not alarm'd: why, there is nothing in't.
A thing most natural. But love is blind,
And leads his votaries, oft, far from virtue.
You now repent your passion?

LORENZO.

Pity me.

VALDINI.

'Twas then unworthy you? Her grace, I think,
Told me as much.

LORENZO.

*(He knows but half the truth.)*

No, no, my lord; 'twas a most worthy love:
Youth, beauty, virtue, and illustrious birth;
All that could charm the heart and eye of youth,
And claim the favour of sedater age.

VALDINI.

But you were not approv'd?

LORENZO.

Approv'd! alas!
O! with such ardour.—

VALDINI.

Then why hid from me?
Who is the lady?

LORENZO.

Seek to know no more,
For she is married.

VALDINI.

Now, I am content.
Enough; go when you will. But some one comes.
The duke!

LORENZO.

Let me retire?

VALDINI.

O poor Lorenzo!

## SCENE II.

DUKE *and* VALDINI.

DUKE.

Your brow is somewhat clear'd. The morning cloud
Has vanish'd, and your face begins to show
The solar aspect of a blithe bridegroom.

VALDINI.

My heart is eas'd. Lorenzo has been here,
And so disclosed the secret of his gloom,
That I am prouder still of such a son.
Come, now we'll to the bride, nor keep the dutchess
In longer expectation of the cheer.

DUKE.

Softly, my lord; call your philosophy.
The heat to-day, and flurry in her thoughts,
The nat'ral offspring of her maiden fancies,
Have, who can sift these frailties from the fair?
Compell'd the bride to take some short repose.

VALDINI.

What! and not I inform'd!

DUKE.

O a mere trifle,
Count, women still are women, weaker vessels;
And we should lightly look upon their flaws.

VALDINI.

Is not a physician call'd?

DUKE.

Fye, my lord,
The dutchess and her maids are worth a college
In such a case.—What has Lorenzo said?

VALDINI.

He has confess'd all that I wish'd to know.

DUKE.

His passion! well, with whom is he in love?

VALDINI.

It was not fit, for me, to ask him more.

DUKE.

No!

VALDINI.

Certainly, for she is married.

DUKE.

What!

VALDINI.

It might, as I the matter understand,
Disturb the happiness, or taint the honour
Of some illustrious house; therefore, my son
Conceals it wisely. He has well resolv'd
To shun the danger, and to seek abroad,
In the variety of other lands,
Solace for his distressing heart-disease.

DUKE.

And when does he depart? Not soon, I hope?

VALDINI.

With all convenient speed—perhaps to-morrow.

DUKE.

I am amaz'd! So soon?

VALDINI.

Virtue resolv'd,
Can never act too soon. The countess here!

DUKE.

*(He goes abroad—patience, patience, revenge.)*

## SCENE III.

VALDINI, MADDALEN, *and* DUKE.

VALDINI.

You still seem pale, and deeply agitated.

MADDALEN.

O! my good lord, I cannot bear this long.

VALDINI.

Where is the dutchess? she is ill indeed.
A doctor instantly!

MADDALEN.

My uncle here!
Why does he go? stop him, my lord, stop! stop!

DUKE.

*(All, all will out: her brain is surely craz'd.)*

VALDINI.

This cumb'rous dress, oppresses you, I think.

MADDALEN.

Why did I ever put it on? Off! off!
Ye hateful vanities, ye load my head.
My wretched head will rest without your weight.

DUKE.

This is wild speech.

VALDINI.

My lord! what have you done?

DUKE.

What? I!

VALDINI.

This is a fever of the mind.

DUKE.

A doctor should be here.

MADDALEN.

O stop!

VALDINI.

My lord!

DUKE.

What mean you, count, by this impassion'd tone?
There is no danger.

VALDINI.

No!

DUKE.

*(Angels and Saints!)*

MADDALEN.

What has the duke done that you dare him so?

VALDINI.

What has he done?

DUKE.

*(She seems to check herself.)*

MADDALEN.

What has he done? for shame to ask so rudely,
When he has given me to be your wife.
'Tis true he never promised me your heart,
Nor could he promise mine to you.

VALDINI.

My lord!

MADDALEN.

The dutchess has been telling me a tale,—
A dismal tale, I never heard before,—
That the mild image smiling in yon picture,
Was my own mother.

DUKE.

A sad tale, ill-timed.

VALDINI.

I crave your grace a million, million pardons.

DUKE.

You did indeed confound me, count. The dutchess,
Still heedless, prattles, and must be endured.

VALDINI.

Ah my dear Maddalen, you have my heart;
And with it too, that fixt and firm esteem,
Which younger lovers seldom know to give.

DUKE.

He is your husband.

MADDALEN.

Had he been my father—

VALDINI.

Ah! why that sigh? I will be both to you,
Husband and father.

MADDALEN.

Horrible! horrible!

## SCENE IV.

DUKE.

How shall I from this labyrinth escape?
Ever unguarded, in some luckless hour
My wife may blab. And still, my honest care,
This love-sick damsel, like a maniac treats;
And raves of guilt and victims. On the edge,
The brink of shame I walk; yet I meant good.
No: I was not bound to tell the count—No—
That's clear and fair. And how knew I their love?
I was no confident. Rumour; report;
But never proof by eye nor ear, had I,—
Letter nor lay; not even foolish sonnet.

This I can swear; all this! but the count—well?—
The count may say, I should have told him. What?
Could I repeat to him my wife's conceit:
He could not think, that one of my repute
Would stoop to that. Yet, he may call it trick.
Trick! fraud! to study my own niece's good!
Po! sentimental stuff: he is a man,
And will not whine such poetry of passion.

## SCENE V.

DUKE *and* DUTCHESS.

DUKE.

Come here! hither, I say! O woman! woman!
What craz'd infernal meddles with thy brain?
The raven's bode and owlet's evil cry,
Are happier heraldings than thy jay-chatter.

DUTCHESS.

Your own mis-deeds, my lord, throw not on me.
I wash my hands; and pure at these my palms,
Is my poor conscience of this day's ill work.

DUKE.

What mean you? Ha! you turn'd accuser too?

DUTCHESS.

My lord, unhand me, or I'll raise the house.

DUKE.

Alas! alas! we have been man and wife,
Full thirty years; would you betray me now?

DUTCHESS.

My lord! my lord! you make me very sad.

DUKE.

I am bewitch'd—I am beside myself;
To take the thing in this outrageous sense,
And thus to sink before a silly—Ha!

## SCENE VI.

DUKE, LORENZO, *and* DUTCHESS.

DUKE.

*(Hell! hateful sight.)*

LORENZO.

Wonders will never cease!
What! has the duke been puling for his faults?
Or has he found in you such charms renew'd,
That he was aping lovers adoration?

DUTCHESS.

'Twas frolic all—I so become this dress:
My youth seems so renew'd.

LORENZO.

No fibs, good aunt.

DUKE.

She's like the eagles, Don Lorenzo.

LORENZO.

What!
Does she too prey on the innocent lambs?
*(Now the poison searches.)*

DUTCHESS.

Gentle, Lorenzo.

What a day is this?

LORENZO.

It is a wedding-day!

A wedding-day! Come, my lord duke, look blithe.
What! uncle, uncle, uncle, ho! come laugh?
Give us the cheer, give us the wedding-joy,
You made the feast. Ah, bungling cook,
To leave out all the joy.

DUTCHESS.

*(He too is touch'd.)*

DUKE.

Softly, Lorenzo. O! in pity spare—

LORENZO.

And has it come to this? Drink thy own chalice.
Such pity as was shown to me and mine,
Thou greedy dotard, I will show to thee.
When two young hearts lay bleeding at your feet,
How did you spurn and tread upon their pain?
But now, when heav'n's red hand of fire is forth,
Opening to seize and dash thee to thy doom,
Think'st thou that I should spare? Should justice mar?

DUKE.

Who feels no pity, yet remorse may sting.

LORENZO.

What do I hear? audacious driv'ler, hence.

DUTCHESS.

He is not made of stone; in love forbear!

LORENZO.

Love! Love it is that nerves me to this pitch;
Loves barbs my taunts, goads me to wring his heart.

DUKE.

Approbrious boy! what knew I of your love?

LORENZO.

Does the cur turn?

DUKE.

Where is the proof?
Where is the evidence? produce! produce!
See, here I stand, ready to meet your charge.

LORENZO.

What juggling devil, tempts my quicken'd sword?
Let me look at thee? poor old man!—begone.

## SCENE VII.

DUTCHESS *and* LORENZO.

DUTCHESS.

Oh! my full heart will burst.—Fye on you, fye!
Who could have thought that one so mild as you,
As soft in manners, as the silky fur
Upon the bosom of a playing kitten,
Could have been like a raging tyger fierce?
The tyger dam robb'd of her helpless young,

Is less tempestuous. Out on you; shame!—
But woe and sorrow, never to be cured,
Can come of these deliriums. Fye! Lorenzo.

LORENZO.

'Tis the last time. Now he has felt the scorch;
My rage shall flame no more. Deep in my breast
The low unquenchable consuming fire
Of my peculiar grief, forever hid,
Shall ne'er again molest. I leave him now,
To the rous'd scorpions of his own regrets.

## SCENE VIII.

DUTCHESS.

Sure, sure no good can come of plots and plans,
That a weak woman's simple jointless talk,
So often brings to jeopardy.
I cannot speak, but flash and there's a storm;—
Live silent; or but to say, yea or nay,—
I may as well go lay me down to die.
I'm a repeater, by my maker made;
And when I'm press'd, must tell how the time goes.
But I can stay at home—lie on a shelf—
See no one—nothing hear—sit like an abbess;
I may as well, with hood and veil, at once,
Go serve my God; and for this sprightly fan,
Sigh to a fly-benastyed crucifix.
Was it for this, that I was made a dutchess?

## SCENE V.

VALDINI *and* DUTCHESS.

VALDINI.

The countess, more composed, requests your grace.—

DUTCHESS.

I'm going home, She's now a wedded wife,
And on her own discretion must depend.
She was a babe; a sprawling, squalling babe,
When she was given to these arms of mine:
I cherish'd her, I bred her from the bud,
Till she was all the rose that you have seen.

VALDINI.

What has eclips'd your grace's gaiety?

DUTCHESS.

She was the pride and apple of my eye;
And all my hope and wish'd for recompence,
Was to behold her happy wedding-day;
And be to some sweet imp of her's again,
What I had been to her. But what has chanced!

VALDINI.

It may be as you wish'd.

DUCTHESS.

My heart was high,
And all the court and town knew how it beat:
There's not a mill'ners wench that has not heard.
O! I shall be the trading stock of scandal,
For thrice nine days, and more.

VALDINI.

Patience, be calm.

DUTCHESS.

I won't be patient. How, my lord, can you
Bear all this too, nor grudge along with me?
Me-thinks you have good cause.

VALDINI.

'Twas accident;
And 'twould have been as well, had it so pleas'd
Your grace to-day, not to have troubled her;
I would myself, have ta'en a fitter time
And told her all.

DUTCHESS.

Who could foresee
That, rapt'rous as a nymph poetical,
She would have rav'd about her mother's doom;
And with such heart-affecting wail exclaim'd,
That she, herself, was your predestin'd daughter.

VALDINI.

It had been better, had she known it sooner.

DUTCHESS.

There you say truth; but such, forsooth, is rank.
Our dignities, the honours of our blood,
Claim these concealments. Taints, sins, and divorces!
All must be stored to break our hearts at last.

VALDINI.

Alas! too true—your words have wisdom's weight.

DUTCHESS.

Had it pleased Heav'n t've made me but the dame
Of some blithe burgher, round and sound at heart,
Whom I, at will, might have ta'en by the arm,
And gone well-welcomed to our joking neighbours;
I had been happier than with all this pomp,
Titles, and carriages—begraced vexations.
But madam comes.

## SCENE X.

VALDINI, MADDALEN, *and* DUTCHESS.

VALDINI.

Come in the turn of time.
Her grace is here offended, much incensed,
And you must pacify.

MADDALEN.

Oh! how unfit.
There is a full and thick'ning sadness here,
That nothing earthly can remove.

DUTCHESS.

There now!
At it again!

MADDALEN.

Pity, and chide me not.
In vain, in vain I strive to check my grief.
The fatal courage that sustained me through
The deathful ceremony, is no more.

VALDINI.

*(Oh! oh! this sorrow is not new.)*

MADDALEN.

My lord!

VALDINI.

A sudden pang across my temples shot.

MADDALEN.

Heav'n help us all!

DUTCHESS.

Amen! may well say I!

VALDINI.

'Tis past—'twas momentary—let's be gay.

DUTCHESS.

My heart is changed—I have no mind for mirth.
I could in some sad corner sit and cry.

VALDINI.

Where is the duke? Why, what dejects your grace?
Where is the duke, I say? O! Maddalen,
Why look you on me so amaz'd?

MADDALEN.

My lord!

VALDINI.

Well. Speak!

MADDALEN.

Call no one here!

DUTCHESS.

She frightens me.

MADDALEN.

Hear and record, ye regist'rers of heaven.
To-day, I at the sacred altar knelt,
A virgin pure, and took the marriage vow,
To be to this high-honoured, virtuous man,
A faithful wife. Again, I take the oath,—
While in my heart revolves the tide of life;
While sense can act and minister to thought,
I will, even to the syllable, perform
All my tremendous vow. Why call the duke?

VALDINI.

Alas! you, in this awful act, but show
What I should ne'er have known, or known before.

DUTCHESS.

I'll to a nunnery, this very night.

MADDALEN.

Ha! where was I, not to have thought of that,
Before my fatal vows.

VALDINI.

Within? help, help!

## SCENE XI.

VALDINI, DUTCHESS, LORENZO *and* MADDALEN.

LORENZO.

Now she revives.

DUTCHESS.

O my sweet Maddalen!
'Tis I, your poor old aunt—know you me not?
Off cursed glitter, wrap of misery.
Oh! better in a ragged blanket, driv'n
From titled thresholds, weeping for a crumb,
Than to have known what I have known to-day.
What would you here, Lorenzo?

MADDALEN.

Gentle vision!

LORENZO.

O Maddalen! my lovely Maddalen!

MADDALEN.

I am thy mother, boy.

VALDINI.

It is Lorenzo!

# ACT III.

## SCENE I.

DUKE.

He has departed; but the ruffians staunch
Will hound his track, before the setting sun
Has turn'd the mountain shadows from the vale,
And will be posted in the olive wood:
There let him bloody lie, gash'd to the heart.—
He'd do as much for me. What had I done,
To be so stabb'd by scorn; and like one curs'd,
Shook o'er the crater of the fiery deep,
And scourg'd with execrations? Do I not,
By this revenge, draw on the taunted doom?
For him, I may have over-reach'd myself,
And cast my own eternal gem away!

## SCENE II.

VALDINI *and* DUKE.

VALDINI.

Where is my son? Where has Lorenzo gone?

DUKE.

*(Then it is done. He cannot me suspect.)*

VALDINI.

What! dumb? Why do you press your downward face
So with your clenched hand, and hang so shrunk,

Crampt on the start? Sure there is guilt in thee!—
And this dire marriage was compell'd and forc'd
In the full knowledge of Lorenzo's passion!
Answer me?

DUKE.

Yes: no.

VALDINI.

Yes! no!

DUKE.

*('Tis not so.)*

VALDINI.

What is not so? Cannot your grace reply?

DUKE.

*(It is not as I fear'd.)* I'm better now.

VALDINI.

Old man, old man, retire to thy confessor.
All is too plain. I ask to learn no more!
Whither so fast?

DUKE.

To ride; to breathe the air.

VALDINI.

May Heav'n thy strange-timed errand speed.

DUKE.

Amen!

## SCENE III.

VALDINI.

Is there no cure? Are oaths of such firm knot,
That nothing human ever may untie?
What is an oath? A bond, a pact with God;
In which the rights to our celestial part,
Are lodged, in pawn with the eternal foe;
Never to be redeem'd, but by the just
Fulfilment of the bond—the dreadful bond!
But, may not Heav'n cancel and set us free;
And by the trumpet sounding from the cloud
Of threat'ning woe, command us from the path
Of our sworn pilgrimage, to shun the storm?—
Of this, who dare be judge?

## SCENE IV.

VALDINI *and* DUTCHESS.

VALDINI.

What means your grace, by this funereal garb?—
We need no outward pageants to our grief.

DUTCHESS.

The ominous and fatal black of woe,
Suits best the day and my dejected heart.
All is awry, and sorrow comes to all.
Sure some malignant planet rules the sky,
And sheds distress and madness on the earth.

I met the duke, as he prepared to mount,—
The foot in stirrup, and the main in hand:
I said, 'God help him,' piously, and pass'd.
When fierce as any chain-broke bedlamite,
He rush'd upon me; shook me by the throat;
Call'd me a witch, to wear these weeds of death;
And flung me from him, as a thing most vile.
Then to his horse, and ere I found myself,
Was through the portal like a peal of thunder.
Where is he gone, my lord?

VALDINI.

I think not of him.
Go where he will, he cannot harm me more.
Oh! he has spill'd to me, the joy of life,
And broke the cup. My poor Lorenzo too!
And Maddalen! all share the self same doom.
With what fell mineral is that man compounded?
Who, to the altar of the golden Moloch,
Can, smiling, see, the helpless victims bound!

DUTCHESS.

I wish that I were dead, and on my bier;
Borne in the hearse, with all vain heraldry
And chanting friars, to the mouldly vault;
There to remain with grinning sculls alone,
'Till I shall hear the angel in the air,
And rise, to be a cherub of the sky,
With my sweet Maddalen; far, far above
The bearded tyrants of this wicked world.

VALDINI.

If simple worth, a bosom without gall,
And childlike innocence retain'd to age,
Procure admission to the home of faith;
Full many a proud and wordly wise afar,
Shall gaze, astonish'd at thy bright ascending.
What noise is that? a tumult fills the court!

DUTCHESS.

Heav'n be with us!

## SCENE V.

DUTCHESS, LORENZO, *and* VALDINI.

DUTCHESS.

Ha! Lorenzo bloody!

LORENZO.

My lord, I think, it is, it is, not mortal.—
I have been way-laid, but not to be robb'd.
The gang struck at my life.

VALDINI.

Here, set him down—
Now is the dreadful curtain torn from all;
Hie to the guard—help! help! call up the house.
Retire, retire; quit this terrific scene,
Ill-fated dame! He sinks, he falls, he dies.
Oh my Lorenzo! Now he breathes again.

## SCENE VI.

MADDALEN, VALDINI, *and* LORENZO.

MADDALEN.

What wretch art thou, that with such outcry, fills
This trembling house; marring the magic dreams
Of my sweet med'cin'd sleep? Lorenzo! what!
Hast thou been at it, and would be before me?
Perfidious rogue! that could thy true love leave.
I'll pinch thy cheeks for this. We'll go together,
Though never, never to be man and wife,
We yet can faithful die; lie in one grave;
And free from incest, mingle dust with dust.

LORENZO.

My lord, take her away; her thoughts are wild.

MADDALEN.

Forbear! forbear! this should have been Lorenzo's.
As I have sworn love! it cannot be thine.
Oh! my good lord, my husband! priest-made husband.—
What is't that I would say?

VALDINI.

Ill-fated fair.
Come, gentle! let me lead thee to thy room?

MADDALEN.

Oh! fye bridegroom; look at that dying man!
To think of bedding, in the teeth of death.
Fye, fye, fye, fye.

LORENZO.

Oh! let me have some drink.

VALDINI.

Attendants! Water!—Rise sweet Maddalen,
Rise from thy knees, nor gaze upon him so.

MADDALEN.

What metamorphosis is working here?
My lov'd Lorenzo, once so fresh and fair,
Is vanishing away; and in his stead,
A pale and glazy-eyed cadavre grows.

## SCENE VII.

DUTCHESS, MADDALEN, VALDINI, *and* LORENZO.

DUTCHESS.

I must come here. The chamber of grim death
Is not so fearful as the specter'd fancies,
That rise among my thoughts. The horses hoofs,
Ringing upon the pavement of the court,
Clank in my ears, like the black gibbet's chain;
And e'en the silly creaking of a door,
Sounds like the swinging of a murd'rer's bones.

MADDALEN.

Ha! my kind aunt; come here, come here, come here.
Hush, hush,—there's an elopement going on.
Marriages are made in heav'n. We'll go there.

In black! coffins and charnal vaults! dear aunt,
What prompting spirit put you up to this?
Lorenzo! look! her grace is ready for us.

VALDINI.

How feel you now, Lorenzo?

LORENZO.

Better, better.—
Think you it was the duke that set them on?

VALDINI.

We'll see to it hereafter.

LORENZO.

Was it not strange,
If they were robbers, first to think of murder?

VALDINI.

Most strange! but 'tis a day of prodigies!

DUTCHESS.

Oh! my dear Maddalen, pray thee, forbear.
Thy thoughts are like the yellow falling leaves,
That wildly rustle in the ev'ning gale,
Dispers'd afar. Rude was the wintry blast,
That so untimely smote my blooming tree.
I thought to sit beneath the lovely shade,
'Tending young lambs, all in the setting sun:
But now, it waves a wild phantastic head,
And soon will lie, before the feller, low.
Oh! turn from me, these pale heart-breaking eyes?
Look at thy lover, bleeding on the floor.

MADDALEN.

Cheat me no more! Know I not my Lorenzo?
Was't not enough to foist the old one on me?
Think you, I always will submit to this;
And take for him, that potsherd of a man?
I hate the sight. By Cupid's dimpled smiles,
The ghastly mimic apes Lorenzo's beauty.

## SCENE VIII.

DUKE,

VALDINI, MADDALEN, LORENZO, *and* DUTCHESS.

DUKE.

My friend, my friend, what dire mischance is this?
Our morning's error, time might have retrieved;
Some other, fairer, won again his heart;
And Cupid, with a rosy garland, bound
The lion of your rage.

VALDINI.

Guards! seize the duke.

DUKE.

How now, my lord!

VALDINI.

Hence! hollow-sounding brass,
The lion claims his prey.—Bear him to jail.

DUTCHESS.

Forbear, Forbear.

MADDALEN.

Where am I? What are these?
Did not the doctor give me medicine?
I saw the count, the label'd phial pour,
And serve the draught as I lay in my bed.—
How came I here? Or, am I in a dream,
And these but visions, metaphysical,
Bred in my drugged sleep? This feels of stuff,
My lord, your grace. They are corporeal too!
To touch, as palpable as to the sight.
But why the dutchess in these weeds of woe,
The floor all bloody, and Lorenzo pale;
And wherefore hold these felon-guards, the duke?
My lord; I was, to-day, married to you!

VALDINI.

Alas! it has been so.

MADDALEN.

Explain me this?

LORENZO.

*(Her reason brightens from the opiates fume,*
*And she may know me yet, before I die.)*

VALDINI.

Her black, was but a strange forerunning fancy.
Lorenzo has been murderously stabb'd;
And I suspect the duke. Take him away!

MADDALEN.

Yet, yet, my lord, let him remain.

DUTCHESS.

What would she?

MADDALEN.

I now begin to feel myself again.
Lorenzo! how art thou? Courage, my love;
All goes right well. The duke shall have his due.
My lord, I'll be to you a faithful wife.
Stay, my Lorenzo! gentle spirit, stay.

## SCENE IX.

DUKE, VALDINI, DUTCHESS, *and* LORENZO.

DUKE.

You shall repent this gross indignity!
To charge a man of my exalted rank,
With such approbrious crime. Let him there, speak,
And charge me if he dare?

VALDINI.

You shall have justice.
'Twould not be well for men of our degree,
The sires and guardians of the public law,
To higgle at the forefeit of such deeds.
Your grace knew well, when you set on this work,
What the great volumes of our country says.
The whisper'd conference; the jingled bribe;
The richer promise partially revealed;
And more temptations in the darken'd rear,
To bend the bloody panders to your will;
Were witness that you knew.

DUTCHESS.

O my good lord!
Let grey-hair'd pity plead for him and me?
Heav'n, by old age, has serv'd its warrant on him,
And soon the stern and grisly jailor, Death,
Must lead him to the bar. What better judge
Would you, my lord, for this great guilt, desire,
Than he that, with a white and shining hand,
Unlocks the clasps upon the book of life,
And reads the doom of all—of all the world?

LORENZO.

Pardon, my lord, my father, let him fly.

VALDINI.

My noble boy, Oh! my Lorenzo dies.

LORENZO.

Oh! where is Maddalen?

VALDINI.

Where is she gone?
Is there no help? Has yet no surgeon come?

LORENZO.

'Twere all in vain. Let no one now approach.
My light burns dim, for all the oil is out.

DUKE.

Ill-fated victim! pardon me thy blood?

LORENZO.

Raise him, my lord. I bear no malice hence.

DUTCHESS.

Come, rise? and let us stand apart and weep.
To mourn is all we have to do in life.

LORENZO.

Oh! where is Maddalen? Oh, but once more.—

VALDINI.

She comes, she comes! The guards may now withdraw.

## SCENE X.

MADDALEN, VALDINI, LORENZO, DUKE *and* DUTCHESS.

MADDALEN.

Ha! is he gone?

VALDINI.

No, Maddalen,—come here;
Support his head; it best becomes thy arm.

LORENZO.

Thanks, gentle father.

MADDALEN.

Sweet! how art thou now?
Methinks the ray has parted from his eye.
He breathes no more. Lorenzo is away!

VALDINI.

Rise, Maddalen; all now is past. What was
My boy, is—

DUKE.

Have I eyes, and see him weep?

DUTCHESS.

What is't that she is taking from her breast?
Help! help! horror! horror!

DUKE.

*(A double murder's mine!)*

VALDINI.

O thou tremendous source of destiny!
Restrain the devil madding in my bosom.
Guards! guards within! your duty now perform.

DUKE.

I ask not now to live. Honour and fame,
Ye tempt no more: titles and dignities,
Ye mixt the posset, share the surfeit too.

VALDINI.

O wretched fair! had we not blood enough!
Thou should'st have liv'd a sacred virgin wife,
And never pleasure would I had with thee,
But to bewail thy hapless lover's fate.

MADDALEN.

A little nearer yet Lorenzo's side,
My noble wedded lord! All I could give,
Honour, esteem, that loving of the mind,
Which earthly natures bear for higher beings,
Thy virtues had: the heart, the woman's love
Was bred and twined with his that's silent here.

Lay us together, where you wish to lie;
And when the all-confusing hand of time
Has done its part, may never herb nor flower,
Spring from the barren and abortive spot.
Come, my lord duke! look on your punishment.
But life is ebbing, and the last low sands
Are filt'ring in the glass. My gentle aunt,
Give me your hand to kiss. We little thought,
When I, beneath your fond maternal wing,
Cower'd from the churl, to take farewell like this.
Lorenzo! O Lorenzo! now we meet.
Lucre nor priest shall never part us more.
We go, dear shade, where no division's known,
Nor other boundary than light and love.

DUTCHESS.

'Twas thus her mother died.

VALDINI.

Come, come away.

DUTCHESS.

Oh! let me look upon her once again?
Oh! Maddalen, that never more can smile;
I took thee from thy dying mother's breast,
A little baby, and to me you clung,—
My heart was full, and I could only weep.
Now thou art gone, and left me in thy stead,
A bloody piece of lifeless church-yard clay.

DUKE.

Guards! to the prison! Bear me to the jail.

DUTCHESS.

I will go with thee too;—sit in thy cell,
And think of Maddalen; but never speak.
I'll take thy old grey head upon my lap;
And when thou art asleep, I'll drop a tear;
But, it will be for my sweet Maddalen.
Amidst the tolling of the fatal bell,
I'll join the psalm, but think of Maddalen:
And when I see the axe gleam in the air,
I'll close my eyes and go to Maddalen.

DUKE.

Give me thy hand.

DUTCHESS.

Farewell.

DUKE.

Oh, my lord.

VALDINI.

Stop!

'Tis meet that I should well consider this.
Thy age, thy dignity, thy gentle wife,
Put in petition and entreat respite.—
My own particular wrongs I set aside;
And you, ye victims, that lie silent here,
What will the sacrifice avail to you?
For you and for myself, Revenge is mute;
But claims, with more than all the Grecian's art,
Atonement for the direful public crime.

His age! Age should have taught him as it came,
That retribution sternly follows crime.
The young in years, may for their errors plead,
Impetuous blood, and reason's twilight dim.
Years bear against him, and his dignity,
Still feebler pleads; for in our titled sphere
Of sordid metal, is the marriage ring.
Now comes humanity to tug my heart;
But, 'tis humanity that brings the charge.
Guards, do your duty! let the law prevail.

END.

# AGAMEMNON,

A

# TRAGEDY.

## CHARACTERS.

AGAMEMNON.
EGYSTHUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.
ARSINOE.

*The stage represents the vestibule of a palace.*

# AGAMEMNON.

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

——And Agamemnon will be here to-day!
Triumphant and adorn'd with trojan spoil.—
After ten years of danger, to survive!
What will become of me? O fatal hour,
In which I yielded to my slave, Egysthus:
Had I but held him still in his degree,
Nor with such blazon of my favour, shown
A doting heart to all the crowd of Argos.—
Some courtly sycophant, that woos promotion,
Will blab against us. O deluded victim,
So in the fume and riot of my passion,
To dare destruction. We cannot escape!

## SCENE II.

CLYTEMNESTRA *and* ARSINOE.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The king returns to-day.

ARSINOE.

So I have heard.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Why are you sad, Arsinoe? The news
Should meet, from you, a blithe and cheerful welcome.

ARSINOE.

But, what a welcome shall the king receive?
What honest hail will cheer his coming home?
Who will rejoice, when he recounts the war?
Who will not weep, when he describes his wounds,
And sigh with sorrow, that they were not mortal.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nurse, you grow bold.

ARSINOE.

Oh! well-a-day, that I
Have liv'd to see the royal babe I cherish'd,
When grown to manhood, and a hero fam'd,
Supplanted in his love, by a vile slave;—
A coarse, rank-smelling groom; a neighing groom;
But fit companion for the horse he tended.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Forget you, woman, that I am the queen?

ARSINOE.

Oh! that the queen had ne'er forgot herself:
And where, Oh where is Agamemnon's child?
When he departed for the trojan war—
Alack, my heart, that was a day in Argos:
The shore all dazzling with the grecian arms,
And every echo of the mountains, shouting
The acclamations of the warriors' cheer:—
He left you budding, large with royalty;
Where is the fruit?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Arsinoe; you know,
That on the very night my child was born,
A menial traitor stole it from my side.

ARSINOE.

Had you not prov'd yourself more treas'nous prone,
By shameless tokens to your pamper'd slave,
That loyal theft had never been committed.
How could you think that there were none at court
To grudge his rising,—not one heart to feel
More for the monarch than his horse's servant?
Who did not fear from your infatuation,
The sacrifice of our true lawful prince?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh! I am ruin'd, ruin'd, past all hope.

## SCENE III.

ARSINOE.

Alack, alack, where is that joyful stir,
That should await the victor from the field?
Where is the preparation for the feast,
The high adornments for the royal banquet?
Where are the musicants to swell the anthem,
And sound a flourish as the hero comes?
Here, silent, sullen Apprehension reigns;
And, for the wine that should flow at the board,
Blood shall be shed, and wailing rise for songs.

## SCENE IV.

ARSINOE *and* EGYSTHUS.

ARSINOE.

Audacious varlet, hast thou not yet fled?
What incantation can the eagle charm,
That the usurper of his royal nest,
Shall not be torn and scatter'd to the winds?
Hast thou not heard the rushing of his wings,
And yet not slunk away?

EGYSTHUS.

Forbear, forbear,
And tell me what to do.

ARSINOE.

Go slay thyself—
Die with one death, for hundreds now await thee.

On every joint of thee, shall torture gnash;
And o'er thy quiv'ring remnants, shall the flames
Hiss as they feed.

EGYSTHUS.

Arsinoe, in mercy—

ARSINOE.

Thou grub, that dar'dst to crawl on royalty;
Better, far better had it been for thee,
To have been smother'd in the stable slough,
When thou, beneath a canopy of state,
Profan'd'st the breast where Agamemnon lay.

EGYSTHUS.

Was I to blame? By bribe and leer allur'd;
It was not I that dar'd,—I was besought.

ARSINOE.

Try what that plea will now avail thee, slave!

EGYSTHUS.

Would you had warn'd me but of this before.

ARSINOE.

Think'st thou, I wish'd to gain the prophet's fate,
And for my boding, lie without my head.
But, now I speak. Thy hoofs are off me now.
And I am up again, and in my tower.
But, where is all thy rampant insolence,
Those high curvets, that so amaz'd the crowd?
Back, from the portal back, and give me passage.

## SCENE V.

EGYSTHUS.

This proud old fury will undo us all.—
To fly, is now too late, for all the gates
And all the walls, are with spectators throng'd;
Waiting the king and trophies from the war.—

## SCENE VI.

EGYSTHUS *and* CLYTEMNESTRA.

EGYSTHUS.

Ha! come you here. Keep more aloof from me.
We stand upon the very edge of life.
Arsinoe has gone beside herself,
And threatens to betray.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Cannot we fly?

EGYSTHUS.

Impossible! The town is all a-foot;
The roads are full, and every eye is wide.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Would that Arsinoe could be prevail'd.

EGYSTHUS.

You always were too bold and confident;
I ever warn'd you to be circumspect.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Had you been but content with private gain,
We had not fallen to this jeopardy.
But you still would have gaudy exhibition,
And ape the courtiers.

EGYSTHUS.

The fault was your's.
Why shower upon me, wealth, if not for use?
If we escape to night; before the dawn,
I'll off to sea, and never come again.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Can you, Egysthus, break from me so freely.

EGYSTHUS.

Your husband is at hand.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But, you, my lov'd—

EGYSTHUS.

Gods! cease this fondling.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah! you love me not.

EGYSTHUS.

Better for me, had been your hate than love.
See what avails your gifts and your caresses.
My strawy pallet, yielded sweeter rest
Than your high couch, o'er-canopied with gold.

## SCENE VII.

ARSINOE, EGYSTHUS, *and* CLYTEMNESTRA.

ARSINOE.

Oh! wretched queen, regardless of thy doom.
E'en while the slaying hand is stretch'd to catch,
Thus, like a silly hen, safe in the sun,
To nestle fondly on a loathsome dung-hill.
If thou wilt welcome home thy lord with blood,
Go, wanton openly to all the court?
Why, with a half-seen leer or dubious smile,
Beget suspicion, since you seek detection?
Since you so dote upon your fated minion;
Go kiss him openly on the high-way;
Hang on his neck before the shouting rabble,
That all may know the lush of your lewd love,
And save grave justice from the amorous proving.
Ay, get thee gone, and curse thy brawny vigour,
That Death, so little will account to-night.

## SCENE VIII.

CLYTEMNESTRA *and* ARSINOE.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh! my Arsinoe, what shall be done?
If flight could save, it is not in our power,
Nor will one suffer; all the three must die.
You were the confident, the minister;

Nor I alone, no: nor Egysthus only,
Will pacify the dreadful Agamemnon.
You, even you, that cherish'd him a babe;
And, by that claim, may think, perchance, to'scape,
Must bleed, unpitied, to appease his vengeance.

ARSINOE.

I was constrain'd; against my heart, I serv'd.
Thick fell my tears, and painful were my sighs,
On that dire night, when to your chamber, first,
I brought the overbold, o'er-weening groom.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And think you then, by sacrificing us,
To save yourself?

ARSINOE.

Had you been wary wise,
Frugal in gifts, and ruled in your desires;
We had not come to this extremtiy!
But, all the nobles of the land beheld,
Your mighty love, descending in the gold.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Yet, no one spoke, to me, as if they knew.

ARSINOE.

No! wherefore should they? You had other gifts.
What was the guilt to them, if you bestow'd
The boons that their obsequiousness implor'd?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Why should the danger then, be greater now?

ARSINOE.

Why should it?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ay.

ARSINOE.

Because, with you, no more
Rest the rich motives of the courtiers faith.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Yet, who, Arsinoe, but you alone,
Can tell, that more between me and Egysthus
Has ever pass'd, than may unslander'd pass,
Between a mistress and a worthy servant.
You shake your head. Well, grant I have been lavish:
It shows that avarice is not my foible.

ARSINOE.

Such boundless favour as you show'd to him,
And rapid transmutation from a slave,
To wealth that over-tower'd our proudest antients,
Are flagrant evidence that it was passion.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What shall be done? ere many minutes fly,
The triumph will arrive.—What shall we do?

ARSINOE.

Save, if you can, yourself; as I will try.

## SCENE IX.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Cunning, perfidious hag! thy insolence
Full truly proves, that I have stood on ice;
A slippery stead, deceitful and unsound!
But, why not her, as well as either, suffer?
She scruples not, to save herself by us!
Should we then pause to save ourselves by her?
But, how? There is not time; and were she hush'd,
Some other parasyte of patronage,
Will serve again th'ingredients for our death.
Ha! is there here a demon, prompting me?
If we could kill the king.—Tremendous thought.
My soul is curdled with the bare conceit!
But, if he live, I shall be slain myself:
And, how may this aspiring deed be done?
Or, by Arsinoe? Or, by Egysthus?
By posset, or by poiniard? Her, no more,
Dare I confide in: and, if he should turn,
And give me up, to buy his own escape—

## SCENE X.

CLYTEMNESTRA *and* EGYSTHUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How far is, yet, the army from the town?

EGYSTHUS.

By the last messengers, the van had come
On this side Mycenea.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Well, Egysthus;
What think you now?

EGYSTHUS.

I only think of death.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Whose death?

EGYSTHUS.

Whose death?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ay, whose?

EGYSTHUS.

My own and yours.
The witch, Arsinoe, will destroy us all.
Oh! had she died a month ago.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

You think—

EGYSTHUS.

What?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

If she had died a month ago?—

EGYSTHUS.

Well?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

You think then, that to-day is now too late?

EGYSTHUS.

What do you mean by these mysterious looks?
There's no one near us. Well?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas! Egysthus;
We stand in imminent and deadly hazard.

EGYSTHUS.

I rue that e'er I fell within your sight.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The past is gone: not Jove himself, can roll
The stream of time again towards the source.
Let us look round; perchance, in this dread whirl,
Some eddy may arise to bear us out.

EGYSTHUS.

Said you not, if Arsinoe were dead?—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

You are well built, and should be bold, Egysthus,
Had you but that courageous enterprize,
So needful to the lover of a queen,
We should not quake in such alarm'd amaze.

## SCENE XI.

EGYSTHUS.

What would the gagging of the saucy dame
Avail us now? Would not the death of her,
Save Clytemnestra; who, by it, might charge
Me with the murder, and so save herself.

Many there are among the palace swarm,
Who think, Arsinoe has been my dame.
I know the queen is crafty; though so fond,
That e'en to punishment, she clings upon me.
Yet may her sinister and subtile nature,
Egg her to this.—For me, there's no escape.
None, none! Had the king perish'd in the wars;
Or, by some sudden stroke, were yet arrested.—
The daring notion bursts like flame upon me.
And lights my fancy with magnificence.
But hark! the victor. Let his cymbals clash.
They ring in prelude to my swelling theme.

## SCENE XII.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, EGYSTHUS, *and* ARSINOE.

AGAMEMNON.

The captives now may, to the inner halls,
Bear their refulgent burdens, and the troops
Have quick dismissal. Let all hearts, to-day,
Exult in Argos; and, to those that mourn
For sons and husbands with the fallen brave,
Th' immortal tenants of the trojan plain,
Give double largess. Clytemnestra, here!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Hail to my lord! all hail be to my hero.
O happy day; my second wedding day,
That gives, once more, to these long widow'd arms,
My Agamemnon, glorious and renown'd.

AGAMEMNON.

My Clytemnestra, still in all her charms!
I thought, ten years of anxious care, had blighted
The rosy of thy bloom; but thou art still,
Yea, rather, sweet, in fuller blow of beauty,
Than when we parted.

ARSINOE.

O my royal liege!

AGAMEMNON.

Arsinoe too! How hast thou fared, good nurse?

EGYSTHUS.

*(I hang upon the point of agony.)*

ARSINOE.

See this, Egysthus.

EGYSTHUS.

Heav'ns!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ay, true, my lord.
But sure, Arsinoe, we had time enough.
This gallant youth has claims upon your favour:
We'll take another time to speak of it.
Kneel down, Egysthus, to your royal master.
Now, my dear lord, we'll to the hall together;
Where you shall tell me all the tale of Troy.
Come, come Arsinoe, take Egysthus's arm,
And follow us. I'll serve you all I can.

# ACT II.

## SCENE I.

ARSINOE.

Is it not sorc'ry that deceives my sight?
Or has my brain been drench'd with th' insane wine,
And I but fancy what I see and know?
Am I awake? Is this the vestibule?
Are these true echoes that resound my stamp?
Gods! I will charge her on the very throne,
Where she sits dallying at the king's right hand,—
To make me in the focus of the court,
Before the king and all the smiling nobles,
E'en to the saucy leering guards a show.
Some were that thought Egysthus dealt with me,
Now she has prov'd it, who shall dare gainsay?
But I will cry her wantonness to all;
I will amaze the hearing with her passion.

## SCENE II.

ARSINOE *and* EGYSTHUS.

ARSINOE.

How now detested! But thou art secure—
It was with me, with me, Arsinoe,
That thy nocturnal ravishments were spent,
I brought thee, slave, from curry-combing mares

To blandish majesty! I gave thee scents
To quell the odious odours of thy trade;
I shower'd the royal treasures on thy back;
I gave thee gems; e'en I, Arsinoe!

EGYSTHUS.

All true, good nurse; but cease this furious clamour.

ARSINOE.

All true! and dar'st thou smile and call it true?
Has Agamemnon come, and dar'st thou smile?
Thou that not many minutes since I saw
As lurch'd and cringing as a fact-found thief,
And wilt thou brag thyself my paramour?

EGYSTHUS.

If need will have it so. Look at this ring;
It is a jewel known to all the court;
You had it from the queen, and wore it often,
A glittering eye attracting star to all:
See where it shines enspher'd upon my finger.

ARSINOE.

I know, I know it well. Thy artful litter,
Gave it to me; urg'd me to put it on.
And when I had some dozen times or so
Worn it abroad, she took it back again,
And now I see it on thy finger raying
As deadly as the eye of basilisk.
I cannot deal with such a sorceress.

EGYSTHUS.

Shall we be friends again? Or will you still
Rave in defiance of such proof as this?

ARSINOE.

If I would screen, some other will betray,
And I shall suffer without serving you.
Wilt thou depart from Argos?

EGYSTHUS.

Without you!

ARSINOE.

What would my going hence avail to thee?

EGYSTHUS.

When I am gone you will accuse the queen.

ARSINOE.

And wilt thou stay? How! hop'st thou yet to share
Her lavish warmth, and Agamemnon here?

EGYSTHUS.

Were you but wise, all things might yet go well,
And turn of rich account, to you and me.
Come, let the courtiers take their laugh at us.

ARSINOE.

Avaunt from me. I thought thee in my power,
But thy familiar has unbound the cords,
And wrapp'd them round myself. What shall I do!

## SCENE III.

EGYSTHUS.

Now would this harpy, for her own success,
Crush me as if I were indeed a worm.
So climb they all at court, and why not I.
Ambition builds from ruins; and the fate
That gave me luring for a royal eye,
Inspires the gorgeous hope that draws me on
To lofty purposes. If the fond queen
Change not her fare and seek variety.—

## SCENE IV.

CLYTEMNESTRA *and* EGYSTHUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Still rapt Egysthus, are you still afraid,
Want you the courage man to help me out?
Take heart and play the lover freely now;
I'll ask the king himself to give her dower,
And she shall marry you. Come be of heart,
Wed, wed her, man, and be a widower.

EGYSTHUS.

Is there no other way? Though she were dumb
As spade and turf can make her, some one else
Will spy and blab.—This night I'll leave the town.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ungrateful man that can so easy part!—
See'st thou not fortune stretching forth her hand

To pull thee to the golden eminence,
And yet wilt not take hold. O there are men,
Who, for the moiety of half thy chance,
Would dare the threats of fiery chimeras,
And through the volley of a thousand flames
Rush but to gain the height on which you stand.

EGYSTHUS.

But what is all while Agamemnon lives?—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Is he immortal, inaccessible?
Invulnerable to the pointed steel?
Feels he no hunger, does he never thirst?—
Had I the motive friend that you might have,
I'd play the drudging scullion's part myself,
And spice his supper!

EGYSTHUS.

But Arsinoe—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Be it your study still to mar her entrance.—
Great gods! the king approaches! play to me
The begging sycophant, and haste away.

## SCENE V.

CLYTEMNESTRA *and* AGAMEMNON.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O silly lout to ask so strange a thing;
There is full more than forty year of odds.
He must expect her surely soon to die.

AGAMEMNON.

Is that the youth for whom you claim'd my favour?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The very same. Guess you what he has pray'd for;
But I forget—you know not who he is.
In sooth to say, 'tis a side-shaking tale.
The nurse, though old, is still, my lord, a woman;
And young Egysthus is a portly youth.
He has intreated me for your consent,
That he may wed Arsinoe.

AGAMEMNON.

What! he!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Riches weigh well my lord against old age.

AGAMEMNON.

She must be craz'd and fallen far in dotage.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

You speak great truth. She is beside herself;
More than a month she has been chiding me,
To give my sanction; vainly have I spoken,
Yea pray'd her, oft, to quit her lewd intent,
At least, till your return. I should have else
Blush'd to have had the wedding in my house.
She is the laughing-stock of all the town.
When the glad tidings came that Troy had fall'n,
Gifts were distributed; and she received
The fairest ring you sent of all the spoil.

Some few short times she sparkled it about;
To-day I see it on Egysthus's finger—
That is not all. The old enchanted dame
Must have a rival, and be jealous too.

AGAMEMNON.

Alas! poor nurse! Who may her rival be?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Can you not guess? Come try?

AGAMEMNON.

Indeed I cannot.
Ten years of busy and eventful strife,
Have worn away the frill of courtiership.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nay try to guess, and grow gallant again;
You must this martial sternness cast aside.
I will prohibit you the use of steel.
Gods! what have courtiers to do with swords?—
Nay, you shall wear soft velvet for your vest;
To-night you shall. What have you now to fear?
The am'rous glances of our ladies' eyes
Strike not so furiously as Hector's javelin.

AGAMEMNON.

But pray whose charms does fair Arsinoe fear?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah true! will you not guess?

AGAMEMNON.

In truth I cannot.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Who should it be, but she that still resists
Her wanton craze.

AGAMEMNON.

What! you?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Your selfsame queen!
Nay do not laugh, for she has evidence.
'Why should the queen, if she were not in love,'
Says sage Arsinoe, 'oppose my bliss?'—
I could a hundred of her fancies tell you.
She is the merry-thought of all the court.
And when we have an empty hour to fill,
I'll call her confidents to make you mirth.

AGAMEMNON.

But who is he? How is her lover called?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Egysthus.

AGAMEMNON.

True; pray what is he?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nay that
Is such a question I should ask myself.
She brought him, to me, as her relative,
And pray'd that I would notice him with favour.
But there are slanderers about the palace,

And I have heard, yet cannot credit it,
That he is of some very vulgar stock;
Nay, that his father was a menial slave.
Some viler envious still more assert,
And say that he himself was once a groom:
But this is wicked, and not credible.

AGAMEMNON.

I think so too. He has a gallant air.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And is well spoken, and of pithy sentence.
To say the truth, the young man has his merits.

AGAMEMNON.

I'll speak with him, and should I find him worthy,
He shall have due promotion for his looks.
But see Arsinoe comes. I'll joke with her.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Not for the world my lord. Now go you in,
Leave her to me, I must appease her fears;
Nor is it modest for a man to speak
Of such a love as hers. Do leave me heart!

## SCENE VI.

ARSINOE *and* CLYTEMNESTRA.

ARSINOE.

And shall I never gain access to him?
How like a smiling harlot she appears!

O that a man so gen'rous and so great,
Should be cajol'd by such a false as this.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How now, Arsinoe! why so sullen still?
All runs right smoothly, pray thee smooth thy brow;
The king is cheery, and laughs at your loving.

ARSINOE.

My loving, mine! How can you still persist?
The flattering lie will not avail you long.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

For your repute, things cannot now be worse.
By harming me, you cannot help yourself.
Though I were sacrificed, the world would say
You had your share; and you were confident!
Think well, Arsinoe, think well I say.
When you have once the fatal secret told,
No cunning then can charm it into rest.
You might as well by weeds and simples try
To place the yesterday behind to-morrow,
As to recall the shaft that you would shoot.
When it shall have departed from the bow,
The victims then must suffer.—Think I say.
How has the king been harm'd by what is done?
What print can he of poor Egysthus trace?
I seem as sweet and luscious to his eye,
As the untasted apple in the hand,
Would you persuade the pleas'd and cheerful child,

To cast it down, by crying grubs and worms?
Can he be hurt that knows not of his wound?
Arsinoe you are wise. Think well I say.

ARSINOE.

But will Egysthus quickly quit the court?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Will you consent to sanction what is done?

ARSINOE.

How! tell the king he was my paramour?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No: but ask leave to marry—nothing more.

ARSINOE.

And if the king consent—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What if he do?

ARSINOE.

Better to send Egysthus from the land;
Think you not so?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Yes, true; nurse you are right.
Will you request the king for leave to wed:
Then might I urge th' unfitness of the match,
And with entreaty pray you to refrain,
Bribing Egysthus to depart from Argos.

ARSINOE.

I yield, I cannot but submit to you.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Dearest Arsinoe! counsellor, friend,
By this decision I'm thy slave for ever.
Ask what thou wilt. Have I no gem, nor gift
That I may give thee, for this blessed mind;
See where Egysthus comes! alack, poor swain!

## SCENE VII.

CLYTEMNESTRA, EGYSTHUS *and* ARSINOE.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

More reverence, youth, remember I am queen;
Here beam your smiles, here on this op'ning rose,
Bestow O sun! the ray of amorous light.
Arsinoe has consented, will implore
The king's permission to espouse her swain.

EGYSTHUS.

Thanks sweet Arsinoe, now am I blest.

ARSINOE.

Pray mock me not. To-morrow be you ready—

EGYSTHUS.

So soon!

ARSINOE.

Rude insolent; to-morrow fly.
Be you not seen in Argos by the sun:
I may repent, and turn on you again.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Come, come, no more; though lovers may fall out,
This is no time for bickering, dear nurse.
Egysthus, woo her with your sweetest breath,
While I inform the king of her desire.

## SCENE VIII.

ARSINOE *and* EGYSTHUS.

ARSINOE.

Presume not thou, though need has made it so—
And I must wear a masque before the king,
That I will light thee to her couch again.
Thy nights of majesty are all departed;
So hie thee hence to graze as thou wert wont,
And with some blouzy mate of thy degree,
Forget the dalliance of a royal bed.

EGYSTHUS.

Gentle, Arsinoe; ill words feed strife.
Our fates are mingled, and we should be friends.
If I am made of coarser stuff than kings,
And to be such is fault; is the fault mine?
If I was mother'd, like a whelp, in straw,
Say good Arsinoe if the sin was mine?
For well I wot, that to be lowly born,
Makes half a traitor of a man at court.
Pray what am I, that I should be so scorn'd;
Mulct of the grace that nature gave my form,

And spurn'd at as a draggled kennel cur.
What are you all that wear these lofty looks,
But blow flies, feeding on the state's sore back?
Have I not learnt the secrets of your game,
And known that with your stately stepping pride,
Ye are gynecocratic puppets all?
Taunt me no more, my haughty headed dame.
What, if I turn on you, and on the queen!
I stand in peril, but I know the worst;
And will no longer wheedle nor petition.

ARSINOE.

Did I not see, or was it but a dream,
You, you, Egysthus, cringing for my mercy?

EGYSTHUS.

But then, I thought not that your courtly craft
Would crush the friendless, to escape yourself.
My eyes are opened now to all your guile,
And I can look at death, with eye as firm
As he of Troy. But life is sweet to all;
As sweet to him that on the stirrup tends,
As to the monarch that bestrides the steed;
And my sweet life I will not cheaply lose.

ARSINOE.

Art thou, Egysthus, that light-hearted lad,
Who blush'd and linger'd, and was loath to come
To share the love and splendour of a queen?

EGYSTHUS.

Thy masque, Arsinoe; the king is here!

## SCENE IX.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, ARSINOE, *and* EGYSTHUS.

ARSINOE.

I had, my lord, a hearing to entreat:
Much cause have I to fear your dreadful rage.
I am, my lord, a very wretched wretch.
Fain would I speak, but terror mars my words;
I am not what I seem, nor what I was.

AGAMEMNON.

Thine is, dear nurse, a doleful case indeed.

ARSINOE.

This cruel woman! or what fitter name—

AGAMEMNON.

Kind, loving nurse, most cruel she has been.

ARSINOE.

Oh! my dear lord, if I had strength of grasp,
I would, this instant, give her doom myself.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I told you true, she is beside herself.
Speak you, Egysthus, spare your true love's blushes.
Come, come with me, Arsinoe, and be calm.
I'll lead her hence, my lord, and calm her fears.
Come, come, I say; you shall have our consent

While I am with you and Egysthus here:
Be not afraid.—Restrain your jealousy;
Come, come, Arsinoe; come, trait'ress, come.

## SCENE X.

AGAMEMNON *and* EGYSTHUS.

AGAMEMNON.

Poor dame! Egysthus! one so young as you
Must sicken at this silly woman's dote;
Far better, man, to raise some other game:
Quit this mean scent and try the soldier's chace.

EGYSTHUS.

But I am poor and she has been my friend,—
Rais'd me, as I may say, quite from the earth,
And given me companionship with nobles.

AGAMEMNON.

Now this is good. I like this gratitude.
Perhaps, you hope she may die, quickly, off.
That honest smiling, pleases me, young man.
Think no more of this wrinkled carlin's passion;
I'll be thy friend, and give thy fortune help.

EGYSTHUS.

My royal lord, would I were worthy this.

AGAMEMNON.

Rise from thy kneeling. Wherefore are these tears?
Count me thy friend, and early claim my favour.

## SCENE XI.

EGYSTHUS.

Unhappy wretch; slave of remorseless fortune.
Thus on the threshold of my fell intent,
To meet this hospitable hearted friendship,
In him, in him, that I have so abused;
In him, alas! that I have doom'd to die.

# ACT III.

## SCENE I.

CLYTEMNESTRA *and* EGYSTHUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Good—good, all true; but then our danger think.
There is no choice, or he, or we must die.

EGYSTHUS.

I have already done enough of wrong.
Let this day pass; but by the morrow's dawn
I'll quit the shore, and bid farewell to Argos.
He has, unsought, shown me much gracious favour,
And but for the sour surfeit of the past,
I might have feasted with a cheerful heart.
Now am I like a sick man placed before
Rare treats and dainties that allure to taste,
For having foully fared; 'tis loathsome all.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Egysthus, this is delicacy feign'd.
What is the favour that has wrought this change?
Has it not flow'd from my ill-answer'd love?
If you are thriving in the royal beam,
Who brought you from the chill ungenial shade?
Kings, like the sun, move in a distant sphere,
And those that prosper in their influence,
Must have the agency of meaner beings.

When the sun stoops from his meridian throne,
And turns the bending lilly to his eye,
Then will bright orbed royalty confer
Spontaneous fost'ring on a humble hind.
If you have this new debt of heart to pay,
I am the creditor; the claim is mine.

EGYSTHUS.

But are we not endanger'd deep enough?
This enterprize will but enthrall us more.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

If you have nerve of heart and strength of hand,
Virtue to think, and courage to perform,
We should, to-night, be only less than Gods,
Safe on the high olympian top of power.
But you so flinch and look for sculking 'scapes.—
Gods! I begin to rue that e'er I took
So mean a losel for my love and champion.

EGYSTHUS.

But when the stroke is struck, the courtiers then
May rush on me, and vindicate the blow.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Fear not the sycophants, but do it well.
When it is done, they'll kneel and crouch to thee,
Like spaniel puppies that have done amiss.
I'll give command, that at the feast, to-night,
None come in armour, nor with warlike weapon,
As we have made the banquet for the peace.—
Bring you a dagger ready in your bosom.

EGYSTHUS.

It would be safer far to drug his drink.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

That cannot be without a confident;
And we have seen by curs'd Arsinoe,
What 'tis to traffic with such ministers.

EGYSTHUS.

I would that I had other means to live.
This task of blood is dreadful in the notion.
But strong constraint environs me around,
And I am clipt to the extremity.
Things come upon me with such rush and haste,
That wanting time, I want the power to think.—
Let me take breath; hurry me not so fast.
This speed of fate appals me. I'm as one
That steer'd his pinnace gaily in a river,
Feeling the force of some great cataract
Drawing him down: alarm'd, he sees the stream
That rippling murmur'd, changed to flowing glass,
O'er whose smooth silence slides the roughest wind:
Louder and louder nears the roaring fall.—
I will into my chamber for a space.

## SCENE II.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

This new felt penitence I cannot credit.—
Men that do injuries, regard their ill,

Like harsh injustice done against themselves,
And seek to vindicate, by doing more.
He feigns reluctance, but his thoughts are firm;
His questions still have been to prove the way,
And once or twice, he slurr'd my constancy.
To doubt of me, whose fondness has o'erleap'd,
So far, the bound of all impediment.—
He never met me with that earnest warmth
Which my desiring bosom still required.—
His love of pomp and lordly equipage,
The fatal source of all our present fears,
Shows an ambitious demon in his breast.
What; if when I have placed him on the throne,
He change like other minions to their fond,
And strike aside the hand that raised him up;
Then am I lost again. Oh! fated fool.

## SCENE III.

ARSINOE *and* CLYTEMNESTRA.

ARSINOE.

Ha! in tears! What means this ominous shower?
Has then some other got the start of me?
How! does the king suspect?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Arsinoe here!

ARSINOE.

Wipe as you will, I saw them falling fast.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

You have, Arsinoe, made me very wretched.
Better, far better had you brought a dragon,
Or deadly python, when you brought Egysthus.

ARSINOE.

Now, now, my words of wisdom come to pass.
But what has chanc'd so in a little hour?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I cannot live, if he abandon me.
I struggled long to root his image out;
But deeper, still and deeper, it is fix'd.

ARSINOE.

And will you not consent to send him hence?
Well, drink to drunkenness; fill up the cup;
Forth to the street, and rant it out to all.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The adder's bite, and the envenom'd bowl,
But pain us once, and soon we lie at rest;
While faithless love and fell gratitude,
Strike, every day, a new and sharper sting.

## SCENE IV.

ARSINOE.

This sorrow was not meant for vulgar eyes:
Sudden and unexpected it has come.
Whence has it arisen? What can be the cause?
Egysthus?—His ingratitude?—How that?



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He ever has been pliant to her pleasure,
And when he goes, it is for her he goes.
Why should she then dread his ingratitude,
Or faithless love? I understand it not.
Can they have quarrel'd?—How! for what, or when?
But here he comes, and I will study him.

## SCENE V.

EGYSTHUS *and* ARSINOE.

EGYSTHUS.

Where is the queen? I thought she had been here.

ARSINOE.

She was, but has retir'd. She seem'd distrest.

EGYSTHUS.

Said she not when she would again return?

ARSINOE.

You then expected to have met her here?
Her mind, indeed, seem'd sore and ill at ease.
You have, Egysthus, ill requited her.
For me, whom Agamemnon has so oft,
While yet a tender infant, milk'd and nuzzled,
With greedy playfulness upon my breast,
'Twas fit that I should roughly treat her lapse.
But you, who have her love and bosom shared,
To slight her so, is base ingratitude.

EGYSTHUS.

Has she again had confidence in you?

ARSINOE.

Confidence! how! What greater confidence
Could she entrust, than her own life and yours?

EGYSTHUS.

But did she tell you when she would return?

ARSINOE.

O you have something then to say to her?

EGYSTHUS.

You are inquisitive, Arsinoe.

ARSINOE.

Not I, Egysthus; but you look perplext.

EGYSTHUS.

To-morrow, nurse, I have resolv'd to go.

ARSINOE.

That we had settled. Have you alter'd since?
What dream of safety can entice your stay?

EGYSTHUS.

The king has shown me kindness.—Have you heard?
He is a noble and a gracious master;
My heart is yearning to become his slave.
Would that I could, be any slave but this.—

## SCENE VI.

ARSINOE.

There's more in him than going hence to-morrow.
Why feels he such compunction for the king?
What's this new confidence of which he spoke?
She cannot live, if he abandon her:
Then is he dearer to her than her life;
And dearer much than Agamemnon's life.—
And still he says, he will depart to-morrow.
Has she proposed to him, then, to remain?
Has she devised the murder of the king?
Horrible thought! O guilt, where is thy limit?
Since they have shut me from their councils now,
I'll play the spy; I'll be the ruler still.
I'll teach her yet, that she is in my power.

## SCENE VII.

CLYTEMNESTRA *and* ARSINOE.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Still here, Arsinoe; but why so thoughtful?

ARSINOE.

Me-thinks your cloud has been of short duration.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Twas but the drizzle of a passing vapour;
And in my clear and summer mind again,
The halcyon fancy spreads her gilded wing.

ARSINOE.

If you, with such a peril over you,
With such a deep and dreadful pit below,
And with an asp secreted in your bosom,
Can share the sun-shine of contented thought,
Let virtue perish, and all speed to vice.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou speakest moral, good Arsinoe;
In sooth a preacher, proselytical.—
Was not Egysthus here?

ARSINOE.

Seek you him still?
The man has some contrition but in you.—
He has decided, and departs to-morrow.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

He spoke with you of his departure then?

ARSINOE.

He did: but he seem'd moody and distrest.
He sighs with strange compassion for the king?
What's in his fear? *(This pinches to the quick.)*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

*(Can she suspect? Can he have laps'd in ought?*
*Then are we lost. I'll prove her to the point.)*
Shall I not see him yet before he goes?

ARSINOE.

He did expect you, and you come for him.
Have you not had a pact to meet again?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

We had, Arsinoe; but if he go—

ARSINOE.

Did you entreat him to remain with you?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What could I else? If he depart, I die.

ARSINOE.

Remain at court, and leave the king alive?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas! unhappy me. *('Tis as I thought!)*
The king himself persuades him to remain,
And also bids him think no more of you.
Why should he go? sure now there is no need.
Go find Egysthus; send him here to me,
I'd something further speak with him of this.

ARSINOE.

*(Though I could pawn my hand, there is a plot,*
*This thrice-shrewd traitor, still so dextrous shifts*
*The very lipping of the thing I seek,*
*Into some reason, fair and natural,*
*That makes me doubtful, even while convinced.)*

## SCENE VIII.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Her stifled triumph and malignant glance,
Are proofs of her suspicion and deceit.

We must be speedy, or we are undone.
She said Egysthus spoke still of his going.—
But here he comes.

## SCENE IX.

CLYTEMNESTRA *and* EGYSTHUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

You tarry long Egysthus.

EGYSTHUS.

Saw you Arsinoe?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Have you resolv'd?

EGYSTHUS.

Have you confided in her?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

No: not I!
Did you not speak to her; for she suspects?

EGYSTHUS.

I thought that you, perchance, had something said.
She will betray us—we shall be undone.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Have you resolv'd?

EGYSTHUS.

I have no choice of will;
We are constrain'd, and more if she suspects.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Come, pluck up heart; throw off this gloomy look;
Wear a smooth brow and cheat the world's eye.

EGYSTHUS.

But how, or when, shall we decide the deed?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Did I not tell you at the banquet?

EGYSTHUS.

No!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Then do it there. The hour is hast'ning on.

EGYSTHUS.

But there; I may not then approach the king;
He will be high in state, and far apart.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Be you at hand, as we approach the entrance,
And when you see me take him by the arm,
And lift my robe, then strike; I will so wrap
Th' entangling drap'ry, as I link his arm,
That he shall not have chance to draw his sword.

## SCENE X.

EGYSTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, *and* ARSINOE.

EGYSTHUS.

Will Agamemnon then retain his sword?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

He, as the king, cannot do else, I fear.

EGYSTHUS.

Gave you command that none should come with swords?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

I did.—Are you prepared?

EGYSTHUS.

I am.

ARSINOE.

*(A dagger!)*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Now let us part—you know the sign.

EGYSTHUS.

—The robe.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Be bold and resolute; we cannot fail.

## SCENE XI.

EGYSTHUS *and* ARSINOE.

EGYSTHUS.

This night I sleep in open regal state,
Or in the deeper crimson of my blood.
Chaos and hell! hast thou been here and heard—
Detested witch; but if I kill thee now,
I shall precipitate myself to worse.
Hither, curs'd lynx, and die when I have time.

## SCENE XII.

EGYSTHUS, AGAMEMNON *and* CLYTEMNESTRA.

EGYSTHUS.

She has escap'd, and to the garden fled;
Had I pursued I should have been too late.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Look where Egysthus stands; alas, poor swain!
Where is Arsinoe? She is not here.

AGAMEMNON.

Why think you of her? She will come in time;
Now let us in, for see the guests are placed.
What now?—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

This flowing robe entangles me,
Give me your arm, and let me take it up.

## SCENE XIII.

ARSINOE, AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, *and* EGYSTHUS.

ARSINOE.

Treason! murder! treason, my royal lord!

AGAMEMNON.

How now! release me.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Strike, Egysthus, strike!

EGYSTHUS.

He has enough.

ARSINOE.

Alas! alas, too late!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Stand back, ye daring and presumptuous crew,
Release Egysthus, and revere your master.

AGAMEMNON.

Tell me, Arsinoe, tell me what is this—

ARSINOE.

Bloody adulteress—

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Guards bear her hence.
I am the queen, and as you tend my will,
So shall ye have promotion and my favour.

AGAMEMNON.

O hell-born tygress, thus to welcome me!
The savage fierce are faithful to their mates,
But thou, perfidious, mak'st thy prey of thine.
'Tis done, 'tis done with me, I cannot rise.

EGYSTHUS.

I would have spar'd you, but to save myself.

AGAMEMNON.

Hence! traitor, slave, and know I am thy king.
O thou chaste widow, that so mourn'd thy lord!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ay, play the man, the lord of the creation,
And scorn the failing woman for her sin.
'Tis but the sovereign element of males,
That nature honour'd with the sense of joy,
And privilege to range. Our serving sex,
Made for the use of free imperial man,
Must shut themselves in frozen chastity,
Like simple bulbs that winter in the soil,
'Till the ingerming season come again.
O it was meet that I your plant, at home,
Should spread my leaves and lift a flow'ry head,
To heav'nly sun-shine and the nightly dew!
Wives are not made of love's material. No:
We are but vessels, casting-moulds for men.—
While you lay glowing with your captive dames,
Or sacking towns to furnish wanton beds,
Thought you that nature slumber'd in my veins?
But such, forsooth, was my voluptuous lapse,
That only death or shameful degradation,
Could expiate the sin.—Learn ere you die,
That menial woman claims her half of love,
And wives deserted can assert the claim.

END.

# LADY MACBETH,

A

TRAGEDY.

## CHARACTERS.

MACBETH.

BAUDRON.

SEATON.

LADY.

*The stage represents an anti-chamber, in the castle of Dunsinane.*

# LADY MACBETH.

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

MACBETH *and* SEATON.

MACBETH.

Methought last night, as I lay on my couch,
I saw a silent-footed phantom pass,
In the pale likeness of my faded wife.
It look'd upon me sadly, and withdrew.
Such sights, 'tis said, betoken change and death.
Attends the spæing hermit on our leisure.

SEATON.

He does, an't please your highness.

MACBETH.

Send him in.
Seaton, how fares the queen?

SEATON.

Still worse and worse.
The drousy poppy-draught has shut perception,
But ven'mous dreams creep underneath the sleep,
And sting her spirit as it fetter'd lies.

MACBETH.

Seaton, alas!—But send the culdee here.

## SCENE II.

MACBETH.

I would a little learn to know aright,
The dark precursors and ill-boding forms,
That make so wild my fated path of life.

## SCENE III.

MACBETH *and* BAUDRON.

MACBETH.

Nearer Baudron.—People say that Nature
Hath gifted thee with perspicatious sight,
To ken beyond our general human range,
The viewless mechanism of the world;
That thou hast held familiar colloquy,
With beings to our sense impalpable;
And learnt from them the index of events,
Far in the future and unknown of time.
I would discourse at large on this awhile,
And feed my fancy with thy mystic wisdom.

BAUDRON.

Your majesty confers great honour on me,
But age, dread sir, is all my faculty;
And that strange skill which rumour so proclaims,
Is but the art of noting, meeting things,
Fruit of a long variegated life.
There is in nature, sir, no accidents.
The boundless providential enginry
Still moves harmonious; and the augur-signs
Are but remote accordant parts, discern'd
Without the wedded wheels and linking chains.
For all the motions, in the frame of time,
Proceed combin'd, and rise from one great spring.

MACBETH.

What are those influential energies,
In their own nature substanceless, that take
Corporeal semblance;—Fate's dread oracles,
Who by the heralding of things to be,
Create the purposes that give them birth?

BAUDRON.

These, sir, elude the grasp of our gross wits:
They are like that occult intelligence
Which stirs between the ocean and the moon,
Known to exist by its effects alone.

MACBETH.

My dearest love! but wherefore come you here?
Go to thy couch again. Sweet, how is this

That thou dost wrap thyself so in the sheet?—
Let me take from thee that sepulchral omen.

BAUDRON.

Whom did your majesty just now address?

MACBETH.

Saw you it not?

BAUDRON.

Saw what, my gracious lord?

MACBETH.

A gliding apparition of the queen.
This is the second time it hath appear'd:
Last night it came dress'd in her chamber robes,
And gazing mournful on me, pass'd away;
But now it show'd the grim gaunt look of death,
And vanish'd, mantled in a winding sheet.

BAUDRON.

God save her majesty—

MACBETH.

What moves thee, Baudron?
Such metaphysical phenomenæ
Are sights to which my eyes have grown accustom'd;
And I would know what is't that they foretoken.

BAUDRON.

Alas! the visions that amaze your highness,
Are the conceits of melancholy lymphs,
Mingled by nature in the glowing brain.

MACBETH.

But what do they portend? Interpret this:
Say wherefore twice hath the wan effigy
Of my perturbed, care-afflicted queen,
Risen to view a pale untimely ghost.

BAUDRON.

It was her wraith. The unknown minister
Who gives presentiment of coming woe,
Alas! forewarns that she is doom'd to die.
If it come thrice, call holy men around,
And let your wordly legacies be made;
For then the warding angel of your life
Resigns the keep to all subduing death.
The same day's sun that sees the queen a corpse,
O mighty king! shall never set to thee.

## SCENE IV.

MACBETH.

He cows my spirit, like the midnight owl,
The fatal prophet of the battlements,
That in his airy cloister overhears
The cloud-carr'd angels, hailing, as they pass
On dismal purposes of destiny.—
Oh what avails all regal exhibition,
While fest'ring in my bosom lies, the guilt
Of Duncan's blood, and Banquo's feller doom.

The priestly benediction, and the oil,
Nor all the ritual of the stone at Scoone
Can charm my eyes to innocent repose.

## SCENE V.

LADY *and* MACBETH.

LADY.

Macbeth, Macbeth, rid me of misery.—
All things in nature have become adverse
And daunt me out of life. The glorious sun,
That sheds to all delight and lumination,
Is the remembrancer of that dread dawn
Which show'd us Duncan, murder'd by our hands,
All horrible with his upbraiding gashes;
The beauteous moon that makes black night so fair,
With her chaste splendour as she climbs the sky,
Still wears, at rising, that deep blush of shame,
With which she look'd on Banquo's bleeding corse.
The steller gems, the wakeful eyes of heav'n,
Show as they shine that they kept Argus watch
When we were busy at our midnight crime;
If one but glance at me an eager look,
The time has been when admiration pleas'd,
I shrink appall'd, and trembling shun the gaze;
The soothing phials of the doctor's skill,
Beget suspicion, for they bring to mind

The drugged wassail that seduc'd the grooms
To leave their royal charge in fenceless sleep,
To the foul carve of our ambitious waste;
Yea, my own hands, though costly scents perfume,
Are hateful by the old man's tainting blood;
And thou thyself, my former love and pride,
Art made so terrible by my remorse,
That I am madly urg'd by wicked fiends,
To think thy death would calm the hell that's here.

MACBETH.

What potent sorcery transmutes thy nature,
Changing its high imperial arrogance
Into this weak and timid phantasy?
Rouse thee, dear wife, with that intrepid mind
Which when I shrunk appall'd in my intents,
Was wont by its courageous inspiration,
To nerve my soul with valour like its own.

LADY.

Oh! it hath perish'd with the pageant hope
That marshal'd my ambition. O'er my thoughts
Tremendous fancies fall like chilling shadows
On lonely spots by untold crimes accurs'd,
And a dread vista opening in the tomb,
Has shewn me horrors that dismay Despair
To cling to life.—I would but dare not die.

MACBETH.

And come the apparitions to thee too?

LADY.

As I, enchanted by the poppy's drouze,
Lay on my couch, me-thought time had relaps'd
Back to that night on which we Duncan slew;
And as I would have wash'd my bolter'd hands,
Deep anguish pierc'd me, and in thought I died.
Exposed a space upon the regal bier,
The same on which, we falsely, sad adorn'd
That good man's corpse; me-thought I was convey'd
With dues of heraldry into the vault,
Where all the royalty of Scotland rest,
And plac'd, dread punishment! by Duncan's side.
The requium finish'd and the herald done,
The mouldy yawn of the sepulchre's gloom
Was clos'd, and I, left to resolve to dust.

MACBETH.

Terrible state.

LADY.

Then did I hear around,
The churm and chirruping of busy reptiles,
At hideous banquet on the royal dead.
Full soon, me-thought, the loathsome epicures,
Came thick on me, and underneath my shrowd,
I felt the many-foot and beetle creep;
And on my breast, the cold worm coil and crawl.
When all that was corporeal had resumed
Its elemental essence, I became
Lost in vacuity and silent gloom;

A strange oblivion of sense, space, and time.
Anon I heard a trumpet from afar,
Swell with a sweet melodious invitation;
And saw ascend, millions of radiant forms:
Joyous they rose, and with them Duncan pass'd
More glorious than the Indian gem. His breast
Was ruby-stain'd, Macbeth!

MACBETH.

Our guilty mark!

LADY.

Again the trumpet sounded; but so shrill,
So wild, so dissonant, so dread a shriek,
That I in terror started from the tomb,
And saw around me, all the wretched throng
That wrought on earth, catastrophes of sin.
Thou too wast there, but so, in form, transnatur'd,
That, fear to see thee, broke the spell of sleep.
Why stand you dumb, entranced in moody thought?

MACBETH.

The mind hath other vision than the eyes;
They are but windows in its tenement.—
Baudron is right, and these prospective sights,
Are but the distant coming-round of things.

LADY.

What is't you mean? Believ'st thou in this dream?
Shall we in death, lie conscious of the rot?

MACBETH.

Calm thyself, love—I have a culdee priest,
A wond'rous man, whose years exceed the round
Of a full century; and in his frame,
The faded energy of life renewing,
Puts forth a-fresh, the redolence of youth.
He hath deep insight of this complex world,
And knows the springs and pivots of events;
Th' invisible pervaders that controul
The secret lymphs which bear into the brain,
Those drifting fancies, that industrious Reason
Converts to schemes and knowledge practical;—
All these are known to him. He is a man,
A sage, of rare peculiar faculty,
And will unfold to us, the pith of dreams,
And that imperishable consciousness,
Which wakes in sleep, and may in death survive.

LADY.

Shall we confess to him we kill'd the king,
And mew contrition like two silly urchins,
Sick with the surfeit of the pantry's spoil?

MACBETH.

My dearest partner of unhappy greatness!—

LADY.

Alas! Macbeth—but let us be ourselves,
And strongly master this enthusiasm

Look at that table—see where ranged appears
The esculapian pageantry of death,
And then survey my blanch'd and haggard form,
Which, more than sickness, canker'd thought corrodes
With these before me, and with this at heart,
I will wear boldly what I've dearly won:
What is done, is; and though my restless couch
Be nightly hideous with phantastic gorgons,
Whose silent transit freeze me into death,
I wake to royalty, and will exact
The dues and reverence of our high estate.

## SCENE VI.

SEATON, MACBETH, *and* LADY.

SEATON.

My gracious lord,—thick-coming messengers
Announce the Southrons o'er the Firth advanced,
Led by Macduff, the fiery thane of Fyfe,
And headed by young Malcom.

MACBETH.

Let them come;
Here, by the bulwarks of our castle safe
And destiny impregnable, we scorn
The shock and larum of approaching war,
Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.

## SCENE VII.

MACBETH *and* LADY.

MACBETH.

The times grow murky, and our star, dear love,
Hath reached the zenith. Fate's malignant orbs
Show baleful aspect in our horoscope;
And fortune, e'er it wanes, dims with eclipse.
Oh! we have found that every phase of fortune,
From the first faint edge, to the round bright full,
Marks the progression and the rise of care.

LADY.

These pallid fancies, better would become
My dreamy couch, than the bold circumstance
With which thou art assailed. Take courage thane;
Rouse thee to war. Have not the weirds told,
That as in panoply divine incas'd,
Thou art invulnerable to the steel
Of all of woman born? Assert thy fate.

MACBETH.

But I have lost the relish of renown,
And that which made the plaudits of the world
Richer than Music's voice, is mine no more.
O curs'd ambition; in pursuit of thee,
Thou unsubstantial iris of the brain,
I have so far into the desert run,
That all around me seems one blasted heath,
And still the phantom lures to wilder wastes.

LADY.

Come, come, forbear; this idle wonderment—
The dismal crimson that so coarsely glares
In the mind's painting of our secret deeds,
Time, with the mellowing varnish of success,
May yet appease, and the admiring good
Confess the merits of our great designs.
I was not form'd of sterner mould than thou,
Nor yields my couch a calmer sleep than thine;
Yet will not I, in this great game of life,
Spurn at the board because these shiftings vex me.
No, no, Macbeth; we cannot now return;
But on we must go—on, nor look behind:
And when a smoother brighter height we gain,
There plant those purposes of public weal
Which shall protect us; and within their shade,
Repose in honour, and lamented die.

MACBETH.

Yes: I will go, for I am pledged to it;
And like the homeless outcast prostitute,
Still heap the cairn of happiness with sins.

## SCENE VIII.

MACBETH, LADY, *and* BAUDRON.

MACBETH.

How now is this, if thou canst see afar
The forecast shadows of events, that thus

The pamper'd Southrons, with the fierce Macduff,
Invade our borders, and not I inform'd?

BAUDRON.

My gracious lord; such things particular,
In the vague range of your old slave's dim knowledge,
Have no precursor but the vulgar cry,
Which long and loud hath rumour'd preparation.

LADY.

His boding then is like the raven's croak;
A dismal gibber that but daunts the heart,
Without instructing where the danger lies.—
Send him away—we are ourselves, old man,
Deep-read in this lugubrious lore of fancy.

BAUDRON.

Fain would I shun these honour'd conf'rences,
But still his majesty commands me back.
If 'tis your highness' will, let me retire;
And in my lonely hazel-curtain'd cell,
Forget the court in charity to man.
O! holy Nature, thee I do acquit
Of all the foul that stains thy minion here:
How fair and nobly hast thou done thy part!
How bright and glorious shines the gen'rous sun!
How rich and soft earth's carpeting of flowers!
How fresh and joyous to the corp'ral sense,
The all-embracing dalliance of the air,
Contrasted with the base device of courts,
The dire cabal and mid-night work of blood.

MACBETH.

Traitor! what would'st thou? Darest thou jibe at us?

LADY.

Tut, my good lord, you do mistake the man.
He spoke but in a fit of calenture,
Th' impassion'd poetry of fond desire.—
Baudron, at night, I would converse with thee,
And learn the names by which to know the stars,
That, glittering, course the ocean of the sky;
And whence that radient messenger hath come,
Which, nightly, in our zenith vault, is seen
With unknown splendour, firing half the heavens.
Till then, adieu.—Oh! shame to be so stirr'd.

# ACT II.

## SCENE I.

BAUDRON.

The night advances to that horal bourn,
Where touch the wheels of yesterday and morrow,
And all the castle in defenceless sleep,
Fetter'd lies prostrate. 'Tis the chosen time,
When Rapine girds himself for enterprize;
Treason harangues his sworn conspirators
In dismal vaults, by torches darkly shown;
And Murder grasping firm the gleaming knife,
Stalks, with perturbed pace and soundless tread,
To the devoted couch.—Macbeth's a-foot!—
'Tis hallow-eve, and annual on this night,
Our youthful villagers, with rites and charms,
And old traditionary oracles,
Explore their destin'd boons of love and fortune.
Some say, that licensed from an antient date,
Th' imprison'd mischiefs roam at large to-night;
And in the gay unguarded heart of youth,
By juggling omens, raise perplexing thoughts,
That ravel all their future thread of life.

## SCENE II.

LADY *and* BAUDRON.

LADY.

Set down the lamp and wait without the door,
To give me notice when the king returns.
Have you heard, Baudron, what this wizzard is,
Whom they have brought again to vex his highness?

BAUDRON.

A solemn knave, that tampers with men's fears.
It grieves me much, that thus his majesty
Should lose the bent of his great character
In a mysterious passion to unfold
The seeds and secrets of the time unknown.

LADY.

This mournful lapse in my dear lord's brave nature,
While 'round the encompassing and trait'rous foes,
Deepen their files, awakes in me such fears,
That I could die for ease. Though I have felt
The pangs of birth, a mother's sleepless cares,
And watch'd my infant's couch with throbbing heart;
Sweet was that watching, and those cares were gentle,
And slight the pains to these I suffer now.
Thou art, I think, a good man; old and wise,
And much hast noted in this mazy world.
Oh! can'st thou not instruct me to redeem
Thy royal master from his cheerless bias,
And to untwine the gnawing serpent here?

BAUDRON.

In camp, and council, and the earnest strife,
Lie the true med'cine for the king's disease:
But solitude and sights of human woe,
And shelterless probation of distress,
Only, can minister to your relief.

LADY.

I have a tower lav'd by the salt-sea waves,
In whose horizon, never sail is seen,
Save the lone ferry-boat in summer calms,
Or stranded vessel in a winter's morn,
With her dead crew all frozen to the masts.
For such a place, so desolate and dread,
I would forsake these gorgeous rooms, and barter
The pomp and servitude around my throne,
If I might taste the Lethé of repose.

BAUDRON.

Alas! great lady.

LADY.

Wherefore so do you pause,
And sighing, wear a look so full of woe?
Why kneel you thus so pale? Rise, Baudron! speak!

BAUDRON.

To gain that sweet oblivious bliss of sleep,
Th' incumber'd spirit must unrobe itself
Of all the garniture of royal pride,
And pray Heav'ns mercy, as an alm, to grant
The nightly down that eases daily toil.

For the proud throne, in ashes you must sit;
Change the rich crimson for a sack-cloth wrap;
Cast from your brow its unblest ornament,
The golden round, and radient type of power;
Yea, on the cold and parent earth degraded,
Confess the dismal secrets of your breast.

LADY.

Begone, old man: intruding prater, hence!

## SCENE III.

LADY.

Oh! shall I never know a calm again;
But like the sea, urged by the charter'd storms,
Bursting embarkments, still o'er pass my will
In billowy violence of troubled thought.
The old man, skilful, by Experience taught,
Discerns my soul's conceal'd and cureless sore.
But the afflicting cancer of remorse,
Makes scarcely half my sum of misery.
Macbeth, enchanted by his fatal credence
In the prognostics of bewild'ring lore,
Foregoes the occupation of a king,
For uncouth riddles and phantastic orgies,
Nor, with his wonted prescience, provides
For the dire shock of England's feudal streams,
Which flood the lowlands, to the Granpian's base;
And, swelling with the torrents of our clans,
Impetuous roll to insulate us here.

What, if by such fore-dooming negligence,
Young Malcom seize us in this last retreat,
And cage us for an ignominious show,
Like savages that feed on human carn!

## SCENE IV.

LADY *and* SEATON.

LADY.

Seaton, what now?

SEATON.

The watch upon the hill,
See, by the moon-light, thick-defiling spears
Flick'ring among the boughs of Birnam wood.

LADY.

Hie to the king, and with some hasty speech,
Say, I entreat his special presence here.

SEATON.

His majesty approaches.

LADY.

Then, retire.

## SCENE V.

MACBETH *and* LADY.

MACBETH.

Be jocund, heart, good things await us still.
'Tis hallow-eve, and I have cast my fortune,

Which a brave seer hath shrewdly scann'd, and found,
Bating the vexing present's brief ordeal,
Nought but presumptives of prosperity.

LADY.

Fye; be a man, and leave such idle search
To cred'lous girls and boys professionless.
Or, if you will in signs and omens deal,
Survey the visible portents around.

MACBETH.

He has explained them all. The fiery star
Whose nightly apparition, o'er our heads,
Hath shed, of late, such fear into our hearts,
He has convinced me, by astrology,
Is the celestial swift-moving index
Of our hot-headed and far-follow'd foe.

LADY.

The dreadest prodigy of all the time,
Is the delusion that invests thy mind;
And like a spell, denies thee power to thwart
The rising adversaries of thy throne.
E'en while our castle and its mountain base,
Shake by the multitud'nous tramp of war,
No stir of preparation yet is heard.
All those fierce thanes, that favour'd our bold cause,
Who, roused in time, would still have faithful stood;
By this remissness from allegiance slip,
And make their peace with Malcom as he comes.

MACBETH.

There's not a man of them that shall be spared.
I'll taint the air, of the perfidious towns,
With traitors limbs for these desertions.

LADY.

When?

MACBETH.

Ere Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.
Beneath our walls, the English epicures
Shall leave these curs that want the canine faith,
To crouch before us; but to crouch in vain.

LADY.

Infatuated hold! nor with the vaunt
Of wild mythologies and false predictions,
Think to repel our stern antagonists.
Know you, the watch upon the southern hill
Decerns th' advance of bright-defiling spears,
Glimm'ring behind the dark of Birnam wood,
Like the portentous streamers in the sky?
Awake, my thane, and shake thy drouze away;
Summon the council, and with manly charge,
Inspirit all that with our fortunes rank,
And boldly as you won, maintain the crown.
But I grow faint, and must to bed return.
The fervid malady, kindled by care,
Parching, makes head, and withers me to death.
Damsels, without!—Good night, my dearest lord;
Rouse thee to action.—Here; support me hence.—
Come Hope, to him, though thou hast fled from me.

## SCENE VI.

MACBETH.

Spirit of valour, more than masculine,
Whom nor disease, nor circumstance can daunt,
But still when heaviest prest springs into strength,
And with its native royalty dilates
Still mightier than before.—Had I but men
Temper'd to half her pitch of energy,
The heav'ns might glare with prodigies of fire,
And hell's grim demons on the clouds appear,
In hideous panoply for Malcom's cause,
Nor change the pride of my collected soul.—
Who waits?—Send to me here the culdee priest.—
If all things be in one great frame conjoined,
The old man should by nat'ral symptom know
The issue of this crisis in my fate.

## SCENE VII.

MACBETH *and* BAUDRON.

MACBETH.

Thy look is weary, Baudron, and thine eyes
Seem as if grief had meddled with thy rest.

BAUDRON.

My feeble rag of life can ill endure
The perturbation that besets me here.
These lengthen'd vigils prey upon my strength,

And I have used the charter of old age
Too freely, with her majesty, I fear.

MACBETH.

She will forgive thee—I will speak to her;
And when this traitorous investment's o'er,
Which circumscribes us to the castle here,
Thou shalt have 'tendance and the softest down,
To breathe in peace thy latter days away.—
But tell me, Baudron, by what marks to know
The fall and ebbing fortune of a king?

BAUDRON.

Then I must speak what prudence would conceal,
And things relate of harsh ungrateful note
To the sooth'd ear of flatter'd majesty.

MACBETH.

Fear not—my hearing has accustom'd grown
To tidings of adversity; and I
Can listen, to the worst that may befall,
Calm as the swain that hears the fading leaves
Whisp'ring that Winter hastens to disperse.

BAUDRON.

Alas! your highness hath already learnt
The dismal knowledge of your own estate.
The deep low discontents, throughout the land,
Have long been murmuring prelude to the clang
Of foreign war, which now so loudly dins
The dirge and knell of your departed power;

MACBETH.

But I am safe the weird sisters said,
Till Birnam wood shall come to Dunsinane;
And by their greeting upon Forres moor,
Have I not found that they predict the truth?
Nature hath turns that in the plainest course
Perplex our wisdom: and may I not hope,
Who hath received such proof of special fate,
That those sad signals which are wont to show
Disast'rous change to others, shall to me
Prove but precursors to a passing care?
As night is harbinger to the gay morn,
And boist'rous Winter heralds forth the Spring.

## SCENE VIII.

MACBETH, SEATON, *and* BAUDRON.

MACBETH.

Well! what new chance hath so amaz'd thy wits,
That they seem ready in thy straining eyes
To leap from some great jeopardy?

SEATON.

My lord,
The tartan'd Celts that from the western isles,
And the fierce Donalds from Benevis' side,
Who lay upon the heath, have left their ground,
And with th' outrageous insolence of pipes,

Are seen by all the wardens on the walls,
Precipitously hurrying to the foe.

MACBETH.

Well, let them run; I little priz'd their faith.
These mountain aborigines have been
The stubbornest to tame, of all beneath
The antient scepter of the scottish kings.
This waste in loyalty smites the great arm
Of royal vengeance with paralysis,
And makes the tasks that press upon our time,
Of heavy labour and uncertain fruit.—
Seaton, why stand you here?—

SEATON.

I have but half
The errand of my coming-in reported.

MACBETH.

What hast thou more? Who else deserts from us?

SEATON.

By urgent summons from the queen herself,
The chieftains lodged within the keep attend
Your highness' presence in the council-hall.

MACBETH.

We shall be there anon—Seaton command
The armourer to have my mail prepared.

## SCENE IX.

MACBETH *and* BAUDRON.

MACBETH.

My soul is kindling, Baudron, for the fight,
And they who dare disturb the lion's den,
Shall rue the boyhood that provokes his rage.
I was a famous soldier in my day,
And my heart leaps for this impending strife,
As when the trumpet call'd me up to arms,
On the proud dawn of battle. But I feel
That eighteen years of vexing monarchy,
Have cool'd the martial ardour in my heart,
And the entanglement of crafty care
Has long destroy'd the frankness of my youth.

BAUDRON.

Alas! dread sir, so is the course of life.
There have been men that nature meant for heroes,
So overborn by fortune's accidents,
That at their exit from the world's great stage,
Instead of plaudits, and the full resound
Of admiration irresistible,
They have been followed by the damning hiss,
So ill and slovenly they did perform.

MACBETH.

Would I had still but a free soldier liv'd,
And been unstain'd by any other blood
Than the red trophy of my country's foes.

BAUDRON.

Why starts your majesty?

MACBETH.

See you not these?

BAUDRON.

Where? What?

MACBETH.

It is the selfsame heraldry
With which the gentle Duncan was convey'd
To the last mansion of the scottish kings!

BAUDRON.

I see it not—Alas my gracious lord!—

MACBETH.

What can this dismal pageantry betide?
Another and another! still they come
Solemnly marshall'd—ha! the sable bier!
It stops—and see the sheeted dead thereon
Doth raise itself. My wife!—'tis all away.—
Baudron—

BAUDRON.

What would your highness?

MACBETH.

Good old man,
To live so long and fear no sights like these.

BAUDRON.

My royal lord—

MACBETH.

Baudron, didst thou not say,
That if the spectral vision of the queen
Rose thrice before me, her decided death
Should mine foretoken, on the selfsame day?
Now thrice the airy semblance has appear'd,
And this time with such charnel exhibition,
That none may question what the sign portends.

BAUDRON.

The lonely shepherds in the isles forlorn,
And pale enthusiasts bred in silent glens,
Have oft by metaphysical discernment,
Seen these sad shows, and verified the bode.

## SCENE X.

LADY, MACBETH *and* BAUDRON.

LADY.

Macbeth! Why start you so aghast, my thane?
Why touch you thus, and look to the old man?
Thy cheek is ashy, and thy restless eye
Denotes strange fear and doubt mysterious.

MACBETH.

Alas! the constancy of my sad mind
Is put to dreadful proof. Around me rise
Such prodigies and omens of dismay,
That were my spirit fram'd of temper'd steel,

And to the stroke invulnerably firm,
I need must quake to witness what I see.

LADY.

I left him hopeful—tell me how is this?
Hast thou been with thy priestly exhortation,
Cowing the hope that he so much requires?

MACBETH.

Oh! there are things in this mirac'lous world,
Which time, nor learning, never can explain.

LADY.

Good, good, my lord—but to the council come;
Malignant Fortune wins by our default.
This fatal sadness, that unmans you so,
Would better suit the weak of my disease.

# ACT III.

## SCENE I.

LADY.

Where may I shun this omnipresent horror
That scares my every sense, and fills my soul.
My shadow turns the monitor of guilt,
And, pointing with its unsubstantial hand,
Seems the precursor of avenging justice;
While the shrill ring of arms, distributing
To all the servants, sounds as awfully
As the deep-tolling of a passing bell.

## SCENE II.

LADY *and* SEATON.

LADY.

What now, good Seaton; what new ill hath chanc'd?

SEATON.

The wood of Birnam has begun to move.

LADY.

What says the king?

SEATON.

He was disturb with ire,
That men should say a thing so wry to nature;

Anon his choler fell, and he appear'd
Like some prime merchant, who receives the news
Of all his fortune perish'd in the waves.

LADY.

Alas, alas,—go, bid my maids attend.
The fiery fever thrills through all my frame,
And darts delirium to my tingling head.

## SCENE III.

MACBETH *and* LADY.

MACBETH.

The wood of Birnam comes to Dunsinane!

LADY.

Art thou Macbeth, and wear'st these looks of fear,
E'en while the men of Malcom, from thine eye,
Hide their pale faces with the forest boughs?
For such must be this daunting miracle.

MACBETH.

But they that did forewarn me of the sign,
Bade me to dread no danger till it came.
Behold it doth arrive.

LADY.

They warn'd thee well:
But the prediction has been read amiss.
We should have stood expecting fortune's change,
And been so ripe in all the means of war,

That Birnam forest, moving from its site,
Should e'en have found our full matur'd array,
Prepared for chances supernatural.
But my enfeebled limbs foregoe their office,
And to my couch I must again return.
Go to thy men, and with thy wonted fire,
Inflame their bosoms to th' accustom'd zeal.

## SCENE IV.

MACBETH,

Why should I, thus, be still the toy of fortune,
While my own hand contains the means of riddance?
This is the key that may unlock the door,
And show me all the secret things of fate.
But wherefore is it, that I dread its use?
I, who so oft in pride of youthful blood,
Have all the tumults of the battle dared,
As 'twere, to force, outrageously, to enter
The undiscover'd labyrinth of death,
Though then I knew not this pursuing fear;
Nor had incited, thus to hunt me down,
The hungry vengeance of vindictive men.
Oh! while so chased, am I afraid to fly,
Since tarrying here, ensures a certain woe;
And using this, will bear me safe away.
To be imprison'd in this mortal cell,
And know the boundless liberty without!
To be so manacled, and yet to shrink

From the short tingle of the setting free!
Oh! to what cowardice the dross of flesh
Degrades the noble element of man.
Seaton, without; who waits, Seaton, I say?

## SCENE V.

MACBETH *and* SEATON.

MACBETH.

What mean these acclamations from our men?

SEATON.

The enemy have thrown the branches down,
And round the castle, show us all their war;
Light-kindled spears and crests of waving plumes,
Which your bold lieges on the walls and towers,
Welcome with gay defiance.

MACBETH.

Hearts of gold!
Give them my thanks. In their courageous note,
I heard the voice of other times resound.—
I'll wear to-day, the armour I had on,
When, for my carve at the Dane's carnage feast,
I gain'd new honour from the good king Duncan.
Ha! will my every thought still turn on him,
And each slight motion of long unfelt joy,
But stir the wounds of guilty agony!

## SCENE VI.

BAUDRON, LADY, *and* MACBETH.

BAUDRON.

O spare me, spare, dreadful majestic dame;
Tremendous lady, spare my feeble life.

MACBETH.

Hold, dearest, hold: what would'st thou with this dagger?

BAUDRON.

Thou shalt in sulphur burn for sorcery.
He holds cabals and traffickings accurst,
With the malignants that make murk the mind;
And doth suborn them to beset my couch,
With bosoms smear'd, and visages all grim;
Like dead men rising from their mid-night beds.

MACBETH.

Hast thou then, Baudron, pow'r with imps of ill?

BAUDRON.

My lord, my gracious lord; her highness' brain
Yields to the fervour of the fever's rage.

LADY.

I feel his devilish conjurations work,
Constraining me by terrible conceits,
To crawl dishevel'd, like the eastern king,
Whose locks were matted by the rain of heav'n.

MACBETH.

If thou hast cunning to concoct the thoughts
To these persuasions, old man, stay not here;
Hie thee to Malcom's camp, and there employ
Thy subtile metaphysics to dismay.

LADY.

Look there, Macbeth, where his black art hath brought
That pale, thin, meek, old, hoary king asleep,
So like my father when I saw him die.
Anon, anon, the spell doth work apace,
And the botch'd bosom shows all foul with blood.
Whose are these gory sacrilegious hands?
One holds a dagger, and the other gropes,
As 'twere, to find the corpse.—They are my own!

## SCENE VII.

BAUDRON *and* MACBETH.

BAUDRON.

It is, my liege, the fume of the disease,
Clouding like vapour her serene of mind:
The sun of reason fails amidst the gloom.

MACBETH.

She was not wont to see these spectacles;
And since thou hast been here, free friend with us,
We have, such air-embodied horrors seen
Rising before us, in the cheerful wake,

Like incantations of the wizard Sleep,
That day has grown as hideous as the night;
And baleful Memory, witching nurse of Fancy,
Mingling the caldron of perturbed care,
Gives aspectable form to dreadest things.
Again, I say, if thou hast wrought this change,
Depart our threshold. But if thou art man,
Stay; for the genius of thy antique lore,
Is touch'd with mystery, so finely wild,
That I could listen, had I leisure ease,
Far rather to thy high hypothesis,
Than to the cadence of the minstrel's song.

## SCENE VIII.

SEATON, MACBETH, *and* BAUDRON.

SEATON.

My lord, the enemy move to the walls,
Th' impetuous thane of Fyfe before the van,
Waves his claymore, and urges to the gate.
I saw him turn impatient as he came,
And drag with fierceness, which brook'd no delay,
The batt'ring engines, lab'ring up the steep.

MACBETH.

Let them come on, and all of woman born.
My soul is kindling, and from every tower,
We will such hurl of furious vengeance hail,

In barbed shafts and missiles, wing'd with flame,
That they shall rue their trait'rous appetite,
To break the fold where majesty lies pent.

## SCENE IX.

BAUDRON.

Poor miscompounded, miscommissioned man,
Enrich'd with valour and the heart's best ore,
But so mixt up with fellest cruelty,
As still to have affinity for ill.
While I rejoice that, thus, the ruthless king,
Whose scepter, grimly clutch'd, has made the land
Quake to its utmost ocean-beaten cape,
Already feels the retribution close,
My bosom yearns afflicted for the man;
As when a father mourns the dismal end
Of his o'er-fondled, long-unchidden son.
Ill-starr'd Macbeth! had destiny withheld
Thy high enthusiasm from the sway
Of thy arch-human wife, who, sternly proud,
Amidst the storms of fortune and disease,
Stands like a rock, around whose clouded head,
Gleam fires from heav'n, while billows dash the base;
Perchance, O hapless, to thy trophied name,
The long processions of posterity
Might have, admiring, look'd and pass'd improv'd.
Hark! 'tis the engines thund'ring at the gates.

## SCENE X.

LADY *and* BAUDRON.

LADY.

I will not, damsels, have the doctor more.
Ha! coreless stump of age, how is't that thou
Appear'st unshaken, while the royal trees
Feel the rude lopping of the tempest's force?
Again, again; the house itself grows craz'd,
And by this dreadful batt'ring trembles all.
Ye jerking vaults have ye turn'd traitors too?
Down, down at once, incairn me while a queen,
That I may 'scape the ignominious pelt
Of rabble execration. 'Tis ours that shout!

## SCENE XI.

SEATON, LADY, *and* BAUDRON.

SEATON.

The foe retires, for havoc, eagle-fang'd,
Pounces resistless where the king appears,
And none withstand the rage. Wounds to our men,
Become, as 'twere, new energies to life.
Their valour burns with an intenser heat,
By the quick stirring of their fomen's steel.
The king shall yet be king.

LADY.

—Did'st thou think else?
What! had'st thou con'd in previous cogitation,
The phrase and suppliancy meet to earn
The base prolongment of thy cringing life?

SEATON.

I have, dread madam, ever faithful prov'd;
Nor aught, that duteous service might desire,
Has been neglected in my willing tasks.

LADY.

Rise from thy knees.—Alas! my troubled brain,
With vague and fearful rumours all perplext,
Betrays me often to forget myself.

## SCENE XII.

LADY *and* BAUDRON.

LADY.

Can'st thou, old man, to changeful life inured,
Teach me the art to keep in even flow,
The method of my thoughts. I feel myself,
Like one forced far by currents from the shore,
In some small bark, that the great billows toss,
On the white curling of their mighty mains;—
No will of mine availing.

BAUDRON.

Happy they,
Who as they toil along the flat low sands,

To pick their pittance from the tide's refuse,
Can see, unwishing to partake the voyage,
The cheer'd departure of the gaudy ships,
Whose swelling sails advance to meet the sun.

LADY.

Thy pale morality would better suit
The meek dejection of a pining fair,
That mourns her high-born lover's faithlessness,
Than the stern grief of a devoted queen.
I pray thee, Baudron, vex my heart no more.
My fancies thicken as the tumults rise,
And whirl in frantic eddies to despair.

## SCENE XIII.

LADY, MACBETH, *and* BAUDRON.

LADY.

How now, Macbeth, what dost thou from thy post?
Forth to the men; nor in thy fury slack,
'Till thou hast swept with iron besoming,
The impeded course of our regality.

MACBETH.

My fate is verified. No man of them
Withstands the flash and tempest of my sword.
Back from the gates they all recoiling roll,
A bloody rubbish: wounded, dead and dying,
Lie heap'd a hideous pile.

LADY.

My valiant king!
Back to the revels of grim Mars again,
And gorge thy valour.

MACBETH.

Ah! my dearest love,
I have, alas, encountered there a foe,
More terrible than all of woman born;
And ere again I breast the battle s surge,
I would hold parley with the old man here.

LADY.

Fye, fye, Macbeth, thou dalliest with our fate.

MACBETH.

I oft in childhood roamed the haunted glens,
And heard the rustle of the bard-sung ghosts;
In bolder youth, all lonely, I have scaled
The windy summits of our wildest hills,
And heard the whisp'ring of contriving sprites:
But, nor in childhood, nor in pensive youth,
Nor when the sisters on the blasted heath,
With supernatural prediction hail'd;
Nor all the spectral visions I have seen,
By night, or noon, or in the witches' cave,
Ere struck such chill into my daunted heart,
As the creations of my guilt to-day.

LADY.

By what new goblin hast thou been amaz'd?

MACBETH.

Each wound I gave, seem'd Duncan's gash renew'd;
Each groan I heard, sounded like his expire.
Whene'er I turn'd, to praise my valiant men,
In their brave exhibition, I discern'd
Th' accusing semblance of the murder'd Banquo,
As when he fought with me against the Dane.
All the encrimson'd secrets of my life,
Glar'd in my sight; and though to madness driv'n,
I rush'd to meet destruction every where,
The bolts flew harmless o'er my charmed head,
And pointed spears fell blunted from my mail.
Oh! that which promis'd me a safe long life,
Inflicts more anguish than a thousand deaths.

LADY.

There is no remedy for us, Macbeth.

MACBETH.

Help, help; she dies!—fly, help—the doctor; fly.

LADY.

He has no lenitives for my disease;
Nostrum nor simple can remove my pain.

## SCENE XIV.

SEATON, MACBETH, *and* LADY.

SEATON.

My lord! my lord! Macduff has storm'd the gate!
The men cry for you; and the rushing foes
Fill all the court.

MACBETH.

Well, well, go save thyself.

LADY.

Art thou a king, Macbeth?—Stay not for me;
I do begin to freshen and revive.
Away my thane, and with the joyous news
Of thy success recruit me.—Thane, away.

## SCENE XV.

LADY *and* BAUDRON.

LADY.

What see'st thou, damsel, to look at me so?
Give me some drink, some strong restorative.
A clay-cold chill is creeping to my heart—
Where the parch'd devil of the fever sits,
And craves the cooling freshness. Give, O give.—
But all the welling fountains of the hills,
Cannot allay the deadly thirst that's here.

BAUDRON.

This wat'ry bev'rage slightly tinged with wine—

LADY.

Ha! wretch—'tis blood!—

BAUDRON.

Alas! they all have fled,
In panic horror at the howl she gave,
And left her, dreadful doom! to die alone.—

Hither ye pale appall'd. This mighty dame,
Is now as harmless as the sludge, that's cast
From the brief trenchment of a baby's grave.

## SCENE XVI.

MACBETH, BAUDRON, SEATON, &c.

MACBETH.

Come, stand apart, and let me look on her.
Tears ill would suit the stern magnificence
That should attend thy bier: such drops as these
Red trickling from my sword, should fall for thee.
For thou wast made of such courageous stuff,
That the heroic when compar'd with thine,
Prov'd minor metal form'd for meaner use.
Yes, noble lady, thou hast died a queen;
Invidious Fortune would have bent thee down,
But thy undaunted spirit aw'd the fiend,
And with triumphant royalty has left
Its frail corporeal mantle as it rose,
To rouse me to great things. Baudron thou said'st,
That the same sun that saw the queen a corse,
Would ne'er on me bestow a setting beam.
Lo! there she lies!—And hark, the storm without
Thunders prelusive to the dread finale.
Fate do thy worst, I dare thee to the beard;
Nor life, nor crown, nor victory, nor fame,
Inspire my great intent. For death I fight;

And will the black tremendous trophy gain,
Ere this last consummating day be done.
Pull down the royal standard from the tower,
And in its stead unfurl the funeral pall;
The ensign of my cause. To all adieu.
Dull guestless mansion of my love farewell;
I go to meet her, though it be in Hell!

END.

# ANTONIA,

A

# TRAGEDY.

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## CHARACTERS.

FERDINANDO.

CARRAVAGIO.

ANTONIA.

TERESA.

*The stage represents a magnificent saloon, adorned with paintings.*

# ANTONIA.

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

ANTONIA.

My heart is full of heaviness and fear!
I blush and tremble like a guilty wretch;
And yet of guilt and shame what have I done?
Last night my lord was late abroad with friends,
And save the servants with him, all the house
Was gone to rest ere I had sought my room.
As wont my chamber door was left unbarr'd;
But I was sunk to sleep before he came.
He spoke not to me, and before the dawn
Departed hastily while yet I drows'd.
Did he not come? Have I but strangely dreamt?
O righteous Heav'n, drive from my madding brain
Th' opprobious fantasy that seeks admission.

## SCENE II.

ANTONIA *and* TERESA.

TERESA.

Come my dear lady, do not weep so sadly;
The count has promis'd to be here at noon.
It was, 'tis true, a wayward prank of him,
So on the sudden to set out for Florence.—
But these deep-drinking English—

ANTONIA.

Oh my heart—

TERESA.

Though he were lost you could not sorrow more.

ANTONIA.

Oh! he is lost to me—and I am lost—
Undone, undone; for ever, evermore!

TERESA.

Why yield to such a passion of despair?

ANTONIA.

Not to inform me!—

TERESA.

—All a riot flight.
'Twas Ferdinando begg'd to come and tell,
Else had we still been in a deeper trouble.

ANTONIA.

Ha! Ferdinando begg'd!—Horrible slave!
To traffic so between my lord and me!

Where slept the angels of the pure and chaste,
When the foul profanation was perform'd!

## SCENE III.

TERESA.

Alas, poor soul! she takes it sore to heart;
And yet, methinks, it was no deadly sin,
For count Urbano, in a frolic fit,
To see his foreign friends safe to the town.
Had he but sent a loving note to her—
But wine that with an uproar steals the sense,
Has no respect for duteous courtesies.—
Why should she rage at Ferdinando so?
He did right well, and seems to deeply mourn
The rash excess that so betray'd his master.

## SCENE IV.

FERDINANDO *and* TERESA.

FERDINANDO.

How does my lady?

TERESA.

Sadly, weeping sad.
'Tis very strange that she should so bewail.

FERDINANDO.

Does she suspect?

TERESA.

How! what should she suspect?

FERDINANDO.

Why I did not inform her when I came.

TERESA.

And did you not?

FERDINANDO.

No; for she was asleep.

TERESA.

How knew you that? Went you into her chamber?

FERDINANDO.

She made no answer when I rapp'd the door.

TERESA.

So then you open'd it, and dar'd to enter!

FERDINANDO.

What could I else?

TERESA.

You found her then asleep?

FERDINANDO.

Why look you at me so inquisitive?

TERESA.

That you should dare to be so bold as enter.
What said you to her to affright her so?

FERDINANDO.

Nothing.

TERESA.

Nothing! how? When you told her—

FERDINANDO.

—Ay.

TERESA.

Perhaps she did not hear?

FERDINANDO.

I think she did.

TERESA.

And you came out, not knowing if she knew?

FERDINANDO.

I did. What said she when you spoke to her;
When you inform'd her that our lord was gone?

TERESA.

Are you then sure she heard you not last night?

FERDINANDO.

I cannot tell. But what says she to-day?

TERESA.

Why ask you me so often? She is sad;
Sad as a new-made widow for her lord.

FERDINANDO.

I think I will to Florence to my master.

TERESA.

You will to Florence! wait upon our lady,
And tell her better than you did last night.

FERDINANDO.

What can I more? You have already told her.

TERESA.

I pray you go.

FERDINANDO.

And is she much distress'd?
Think you she will be angry when she sees me?

TERESA.

Why should she? Sure it was no fault of yours?

FERDINANDO.

The door was open, and I thought she heard.

TERESA.

You thought she heard!

FERDINANDO.

In truth I did, Teresa.

TERESA.

'Tis very strange!—Go, get you hence, audacious.

## SCENE V.

TERESA.

There is some hideous mystery in this.—
She is almost distracted in her thoughts.
Yet is this wretch that was the messenger
Not certain if she heard him when he told.
For then he says she slept; and yet he thinks

That she did know of his presumptuous entrance.
Why should he fear her anger? Or why she
So kindle to distraction at his name?
Heav'ns, could the varlet be so bold!—
Could she in sleep, unconscious, be betray'd?
O wretched lady! O ill-fated fair!
So chaste, so excellent to thy lov'd lord.—
But let me not to such conceptions yield;
If she has been a partial hypocrite,
And heard the curs'd intruder in the room.—
The painter here! why has he left his work?
It is not usual with this studious man.

## SCENE VI.

TERESA *and* CARRAVAGIO.

TERESA.

What seek you signor Carravagio here?

CARRAVAGIO.

The countess wants you; she is very ill.

TERESA.

She parted from me but few minutes since,
And then complain'd not: only griev'd to think
The count so hastily had gone to Florence.

CARRAVAGIO.

Has nothing else befallen?

TERESA.

As I hope.
Think you that she has other cause to grieve?

CARRAVAGIO.

Something most fatal has occurr'd last night.
The countess seem'd as one would like to paint:
Lucretia when she had escap'd from Tarquin.

TERESA.

She mourns this luckless frolic of her lord.

CARRAVAGIO.

No, no; her grief is of a deeper wound.

TERESA.

Why signor Carravagio think you so?

CARRAVAGIO.

The painter's art instructs him to discern
The movements of the spirit in the face.
Before this anguish, keen and terrible,
She still has worn a countenance serene;
Modest, though buxom, and though blooming, mild,
Like cheerful Dian waiting for the day.—
But go, she needs you. Sooth her if you can.
Send Ferdinando, if you see him, to me.

## SCENE VII.

CARRAVAGIO.

The fellow has a dark lascivious leer,
So blended with a sober villainous air,
That he assists my fancy as I draw
The story of Susannah and the elders.

## SCENE VIII.

CARRAVAGIO *and* FERDINANDO.

CARRAVAGIO.

How now, friend Ferdinando. Know you not
That you have kept me idle all the morning?

FERDINANDO.

I was not hired to act a jewish priest.
Sir, I have other duty in my place.

CARRAVAGIO.

The count has said whene'er I wanted you,
All other service should be then postponed.

FERDINANDO.

But I have business, sir, in town to-day.

CARRAVAGIO.

Does not the count return?

FERDINANDO.

I cannot tell.

CARRAVAGIO.

Were you not with him at the Villa Fresca?
I heard you were, and came home late last night.

FERDINANDO.

Who told you that?

CARRAVAGIO.

The countess did herself.
Alas, poor lady! she is much distress'd.

FERDINANDO.

Is she?

CARRAVAGIO.

She is knave!—Hast thou done aught wrong?

FERDINANDO.

What! I sir?

CARRAVAGIO.

Yes.

FERDINANDO.

Did she say aught of me?

CARRAVAGIO.

Thou hast a masterly command of feature.
But there is fear and trouble in thine eye.
'Tis not contrition. No: and a wild hope
Gleams now and then upon thy troubled fear;
Like glimpsing sunshine on the wint'ry waves.
What mischief hast thou done?

FERDINANDO.

Mischief! What I?

CARRAVAGIO.

What hast thou done that yet may be conceal'd?

FERDINANDO.

You much amaze me, sir, by what you say.

CARRAVAGIO.

I am but in this house, professional;
Nor does it suit my nature thus to pry.
But thou hast done, or I mistake my trade,
Some guilty deed, that flatters thee with hope.

## SCENE IX.

FERDINANDO.

How should this cunning artist thus detect?
He and Teresa have conferr'd together.
The countess too has something said of me.
Are they in league? Can she have made disclosure?
And yet, me-thinks she would not well do that.
I told Teresa, I was in the room.
If I, why not another? I am safe!
I will Teresa's thoughts so turn aslant,
That the suspicion shall remove from me.
Had but the countess been a little shrewd.
'Tis true she took me for the count.—What then?
She may again accept me, for myself;
At least, 'tis best, I think, still to remain.

## SCENE X.

TERESA *and* FERDINANDO.

TERESA.

What, Ferdinando! wherefore are you here?
Not gone to Florence, nor with Carravagio?

FERDINANDO.

I do not like that painter in this house.

TERESA.

No, Ferdinando!

FERDINANDO.

No. How does my lady?

TERESA.

Dejected; thoughtful; speaking not a word.

FERDINANDO.

If we were in some safe and secret place,
I would, Teresa, something say to you.—
But is my lady very sad indeed?

TERESA.

Have I not told you, almost wildly sad?

FERDINANDO.

She spoke with Carravagio, as I know.

TERESA.

She did. What of it; passing to her room?

FERDINANDO.

Were you not present when she spoke with him?

TERESA.

'Twas but a word or two, and quickly said.

FERDINANDO.

But what she said, you cannot truly tell?

TERESA.

Indeed, not I.

FERDINANDO.

Teresa.—

TERESA.

Well?

FERDINANDO.

Teresa;
You are a woman, knowing and observant.
I wish we were in some secluded room;
Where no intrusion might break in upon us.—
How did the painter look when you saw him?

TERESA.

He pitied much the countess.

FERDINANDO.

Pitied!
These artists sure, are men of subtile craft.
He pitied?

TERESA.

Ay!

FERDINANDO.

What did he know to pity?
I went last night into our lady's room.—

TERESA.

You told me so;—a daring shame it was.

FERDINANDO.

Well; have you learnt though, if she heard me speak?

TERESA.

I did.

FERDINANDO.

What said she?
Lookt like one that kens
Dread things, invisible to mortal sight.—
Just like Paulina in the picture there,
When told her love was not the God Anubis,
Pale agonized, almost foregone in mind.

FERDINANDO.

Think you the painter knows that I was there?
It may be good for him to turn on me.
This is a matter that cannot long hide:
Let you and I, Teresa, council keep;—
Have all our eyes and all our ears set open.
These men of art do other things at night,
Than watch the moon-light as it, brightening, falls
On busts and statues in a gallery.

## SCENE XI.

TERESA.

'Tis plain, 'tis sure she grieves not for her lord.
My thoughts and fears fell first on Ferdinando:

He is of that complexion, and so bold;
And I have seen him gaze profanely at her.
But Carravagio! True he eyes her oft;
And in his study, here and there are seen,
Both nymphs and goddesses, where one may trace
Her comely lineaments; yet in his gaze,
He looks not as a man on woman looks,
But as a student pond'ring o'er a text.
I should as soon expect to find him bedded
With Venus or Diana, as with her.
Lo, where she comes, dejected and perplext.

## SCENE XII.

ANTONIA.

My lord, you said, was to be here at noon.

TERESA.

So Ferdinando told me. Heard you not
What he reported when he came last night?

ANTONIA.

Eternal horror blot the fatal night.
I heard him not; I was wrapt up in sleep.
Oh! my lov'd lord, that could so rashly leave
Thy faithful wife defenceless while a slave.—
Where is the fiend?—

TERESA.

Whom, my dear lady, whom?

ANTONIA.

The sacrilegious and infernal snake
That crawled, unheard, to—

TERESA.

Ferdinando?

ANTONIA.

—Yes.

TERESA.

You heard him then when he was in the room?

ANTONIA.

Darest thou, presumptuous wench, say that I knew?

TERESA.

Pardon me, madam, if I say amiss.
It was, indeed, an impious intrusion.

ANTONIA.

Ha! how intrusion? What know'st thou of it?

TERESA.

Was he not seen by signor Carravagio?
He often walks the gallery at night.

ANTONIA.

Go send the painter, instantly, to me.

TERESA.

Here is a riddle, ravell'd and perplext!

## SCENE XIII.

ANTONIA.

If I could 'raze conviction from my mind,
And think of all as an unhappy dream.—
But if all know it, surely there is proof;
And the poor victim of perfidious sleep,
Shall be blasphem'd by all the lib'lous world:
Nor will the cloister'd burial avail.

## SCENE XIV.

CARRAVAGIO *and* ANTONIA.

CARRAVAGIO.

I wait obedient, lady, to your will.

ANTONIA.

It is not, Carravagio, wise of you,
To walk and pry about the house at night.

CARRAVAGIO.

Some one has slandered me, to say I pry.
Save in the gall'ry, when the moon is up,
Or in the porticos, to study shadows,
I never quit my chamber after dark.

ANTONIA.

Why were you in the gallery last night?
The moon was down before I went to sleep,
And it was pitchy dark;—a dismal night!

CARRAVAGIO.

My honour'd lady, credit not this tale.
I had retired before eleven rung.
If there were pryers in the gallery,
I was not one. I never will betray.

ANTONIA.

Betray! What sir would you betray of mine?

CARRAVAGIO.

Pardon the word.

ANTONIA.

Sir, you may now retire.

## SCENE XV.

ANTONIA.

He never will betray! Does he then know?
He went to bed before eleven rung.—
How could he know, to say he'll not betray?
He went to bed, but he might rise again;
And he is wont to walk about at night.
Triple confusion was the villain him?
Ha! Ferdinando! I will sift him next.

## SCENE XVI.

ANTONIA *and* FERDINANDO.

ANTONIA.

How dar'd you, wretch! break, at the dead of night,
Into my chamber as I sleeping lay?

FERDINANDO.

Was there no other there?

ANTONIA.

Great God! what other?

FERDINANDO.

Madam, 'tis true I found your door unbarr'd;
Enter'd unheard, as—

ANTONIA.

Wretch! you shall be torn
To rags by tygers, when my lord returns.
I could, myself, rive thy accursed flesh.—
Oh! Heav'n!—Oh! Heav'n!—to leave me so forlorn.

FERDINANDO.

*(I'll brave her out.)*—Have confidence in me.
But when you next in this intrigue indulge,
Dismiss him ere you sleep.

ANTONIA.

Whom! whom! accurst?

FERDINANDO.

He that usurp'd the linen of my lord;
For had it been the count himself that came.—
But trust to me. If you are calm and wise,
I'll be as secret as your paramour.

ANTONIA.

Hence! hence! insulting traitor; hence! I say

## SCENE XVI.

ANTONIA.

Was it not him? 'Twas Carravagio then:
Yet he has ever seem'd to me respectful;
And by the enthusiasm of his art,
Wholly enchanted. This detested fox
Wears an audacious smile, which more than once,
Has, with a terrible presage, alarm'd me.
Yet Carravagio too said I was safe,
For he would not betray.—Both know it then.
But which?—Who is the guilty thief of me?
Whom shall I charge to my belov'd Urbano?
And will he credit me? Alas! alas!
I must no longer claim him for my lord.
Yet, have I never felt one swerving thought
From the pure tenour of my marriage vow,
But ever been in my allegiance faithful.
Faithful!—O God! am I a faithless wife?
I, who so hop'd in lofty pride of mind,
To show our sensual italian dames,
That Portia, nor the mother of the Grachii,
Were fictions feign'd. Oh! what have I become?
Sunk to a level with the pronest vile,
And most abhorrent to my wretched self.

# ACT II.

## SCENE I.

CARRAVAGIO.

I cannot bend my thoughts upon my work;
Nor dare I note what fancy would suggest.
What can it be?—She has sustain'd a wrong,
Which dyes her face alternately with shame,
And bleaches with disgust. Alas! poor lady.

## SCENE II.

TERESA *and* CARRAVAGIO.

TERESA.

How! here again! Whom seek you, signor, here?
You were not wont to walk in this saloon?

CARRAVAGIO.

This morning, Ferdinando has affairs,
And I am otherwise not very well.

TERESA.

Not very well?

CARRAVAGIO.

Ay! Why should that surprise you?

TERESA.

You walk too much, good signor, in the night.
Night is the season for refreshing sleep,

And those who trespass on its lonely hours,
Have cares, or fears, or troubled thoughts, or love?

CARRAVAGIO.

You speak oracular. My art requires
That I should mark the various falling light;
And who can see the moon-beam, or the lamp,
Shed their true bright'ning, but when night prevails.

TERESA.

Cannot you be content with sun-shine hues?
They charm the eye with more variety.

CARRAVAGIO.

It is my taste,—my genius prompts me so.

TERESA.

Pray what is that? What is this genius, sir?
I hear of it, yet know not what it is.

CARRAVAGIO.

'Tis some peculiarity of mood,
Which makes the difference between mind and mind,
That figure, feature, colour, gait and air,
Make between man and man.—From sense it comes.

TERESA.

How may that be? We feel, taste, hear, and smell;
And saving accidents, see things alike?

CARRAVAGIO.

True! but the working is unknown to me.

TERESA.

I understand: some have a keener relish
Of this or that, more than their neighbours have.

CARRAVAGIO.

'Tis so, I think. Some by the ear, are charm'd
With plaintive melodies, or cheerful sounds;
Some by the eye, with various forms and hues.
The senses are the portals of the mind;
And genius enters by the most frequented,
Or that which nature has constructed best.

TERESA.

Genius then makes, if I conceive aright,
By practice, or some liveliness of sense,
Men prone to find, and seize their means of pleasure;
And as you oft foregoe the midnight sleep,
To catch the shadows of the moony hour,
Or rise in company, as I have seen you,
Regardless of all decorous demeanour,
To bid a stranger beauty bend aslant;
Some other, by his different genius led,
Would seize on chance, nor fear he might offend.

CARRAVAGIO.

You're wond'rous metaphysical Teresa!—
But why so suddenly at odds in thought?

TERESA.

The moon, I think, went down at ten last night;
Nor were there any lights for you at two.—
How came you to be stirring at that hour?

CARRAVAGIO.

I! I Teresa? Wherefore ask you this?
Your lady chided me, and said I pry.
What has been done? What ill is thought of me?

TERESA.

It was at two that Ferdinando came.

CARRAVAGIO.

Well?

TERESA.

Saw you him not?

CARRAVAGIO.

At two last night, I?
I heard eleven strike when in my bed,
And slumb'ring soon, waked not before the dawn.

TERESA.

Was ever robb'ry more atrocious done?

CARRAVAGIO.

Robb'ry! am I suspected of a theft?

TERESA.

O no, no, no; it was not done by you.
Oh! my sweet lady to be plunder'd so!
How will her lov'd and loving lord deplore!

## SCENE III.

CARRAVAGIO *and* FERDINANDO.

CARRAVAGIO.

'Tis very strange! How could they doubt of me?
Why should a robb'ry crimson her with shame?
Ferdinando!—

FERDINANDO.

Sir! well?

CARRAVAGIO.

*(I am distrest.)*

FERDINANDO.

If you don't want me, sir, I may retire.

CARRAVAGIO.

Was it at two, that you came home last night?

FERDINANDO.

It was: Pray what is it to you? Am I
Bound to inform you of my coming home;
Or when, or how, I spend my master's time?

CARRAVAGIO.

Friend, be not insolent. Know, sullen knave,
That not thy master would so answer me.

FERDINANDO.

No: were he wise, he would not use his tongue.

CARRAVAGIO.

For this time I can pass thy insolence.—
There has been done a fatal deed last night.

FERDINANDO.

I know there has; and do you, sir, blame me?

CARRAVAGIO.

Art thou afraid I should, ill-manner'd cur?
But if in matter so juridical,
I could persuade the world of my skill,
There would not want sufficient evidence,
The forehead mark of guilt is set so plain.

FERDINANDO.

Shall I be ruin'd by your painting fancies?
What is there, sir, in this same pencil craft,
To make of me a villain or a saint,
But the devices of a plotting brain?

CARRAVAGIO.

Think'st thou, lewd epicure, thy sensual eye
Can the fine workings of the mind discern,
As they develope to the painter's sight;
Or that my art but ministers to pomp,
And has no influence in that holy process,
Which separates the pure celestial mind,
From such vile carnal dross, as rules in thee?
The painter's pencil, in expression true,
Conveys a moral like the poet's pen;

And feelings faithful on the easel limm'd,
Instruct the spirit and improve the heart,
Like eloquence, with all the shades of phraze,
Or poetry, embodied on the stage.
Go; fear my skill; and if thou can'st, atone;
For thou hast done that which I dread to think.—
A deed so dark, leads to a deadly sequel.

## SCENE IV.

TERESA *and* FERDINANDO.

TERESA.

Stop! traitor, stop! or if there be a name
Of more perfidious villany expressive,
I'll call thee that, incarnated of Hell!

FERDINANDO.

What means the woman with this noisy riot!

TERESA.

Thou smooth unfathomable villany,
To vent the dev'lish venom of thy guile,
With such insidious plausibility
Against an honest and unworldly man!

FERDINANDO.

Think you, the painter then is innocent?
Think you that one so skill'd in trimming hues,
Is yet so little practiced in his craft
As not to make his visage for the time?—

I've been the valet of our lord the count,
Ten years and more; and he is but a stranger:
In all that time, what ill know you of me;
What good of him?

TERESA.

I know that you have been
A flagrant master of my silly sex,
While he has but a mastership attain'd
In forms and shades: spare fruit of patient study.

FERDINANDO.

How should he know of what was done last night?
Answer me that. What spirit serves his ear,
To give advertisement of secret things?
Grant him the skill to spy into our thoughts;
'Tis but the present thought that rules the face;
Still as it shifts, a different guize succeeds;
How then should he know of an act that's past?
He could as well tell when you went to sleep
As know this secret, had he not been told.
Was he a witness, or a party, think you?
But what, Teresa, does the countess say?

TERESA.

She sits disconsolate, and only sighs,
Or starts, as 'twere, by sudden anguish stung;
And frantic flutt'ring, flies from room to room.

FERDINANDO.

When was't she told you what had pass'd?

TERESA.

Told me!

She never told me.

FERDINANDO.

No! How knew you then?

TERESA.

I guess'd of something dismal by her grief,
And when you told me you were in the room.—
Why do you beat upon your brow so fiercely?

FERDINANDO.

Did she not send you to enquire?

TERESA.

Not she.

FERDINANDO.

Why stir you then so busily in it?

TERESA.

Think you that such a thing should chance, and I
Not seek to learn the truth and circumstance.

FERDINANDO.

We are, Teresa, but a pair of fools.
In all this, there may be but our conception.
Sift you herself—'tis meet she should be vext,—
That such as I broke in upon her sleep.

TERESA.

But how came you to think of Carravagio?

FERDINANDO.

I learnt from you what had, or may have, chanc'd,
And knowing his nocturnal rambles thought—

TERESA.

You turn my fancy, fellow, all awry;
I may be wrong, and yield to false conceits,
Or thou art but a deep and deeper knave.

## SCENE V.

FERDINANDO.

I have o'er-leap'd myself. Had I not told
This curious lynx of being in the room,
The countess still, perhaps, had nothing said.
Lo where she comes!—I'll stand apart and spy.

## SCENE VI.

ANTONIA *and* FERDINANDO.

ANTONIA.

Let me no longer bend to this despair;
While I exhaust myself, with useless passion,
The secret Tarquin may escape secure.
Shame that restrains the speaking of my wrong,
Is, in this case, the minister of guilt.—
What though I may to cloister'd sorrow go,
Who will believe my chastity of mind,
If I depart and leave the spoiler free?—

Let me be calm and patient to discover
Which by the loathsome Belial is possess'd.
Why should I doubt? But still the fiend denies
And speaks as if he saw!—Peace, peace my heart;
'Tis done, 'tis done—nor sighs nor tears avail.
No sigh can turn the moment wafted by;
Nor tear obliviate the guilty stain.—
How my brain kindles when this wretch appears—
Ferdinando!—

FERDINANDO.

Madam!—

ANTONIA.

Hither; art there?

FERDINANDO.

(*[redacted] what can ye intend?*)

ANTONIA.

How dar'd you violate?—O God! O God!
And must I stoop to speak on such a theme?
What devil tempted you into my room?
No more prevarication; well you know
There was no other, but yourself, with me.

FERDINANDO.

You knew me then?

ANTONIA.

Say not, hell-fox, I knew.

FERDINANDO.

Softly, sweet lady, be a little wise,
No one may know if we are shrewd ourselves;
'Tis true you knew me not. But now—she's mad!

## SCENE VII.

FERDINANDO.

This flaming rage is female artifice.
Had I not told Teresa all was safe—
Had I suppress'd that I was in the room,
And sent the mouser prying through the house,
All had gone well.—Curse on my cautious fear:
My rash precaution has betray'd the whole.

## SCENE VIII.

CARRAVAGIO, TERESA, *and* FERDINANDO.

CARRAVAGIO.

Ha! Ferdinando! friend, art thou discover'd?

TERESA.

At length together I have found them both.—
Stay Ferdinando, for I come to speak,
And face to face bring out the dismal truth.

FERDINANDO.

Who gave you right?

TERESA.

Who gave me right!

FERDINANDO.

Ay, who?

TERESA.

Shall deeds of such opprobrious act be done,
And no one dare to search how, or by whom!

CARRAVAGIO.

Humanity, thou firm complexion'd bronze,
Commissions her. Such misery and woe,
As wring the spirit of her hapless lady,
Dictate authority to all that's human.—
I met the countess flying as I came,
Her face distorted, and her fingers spread,
And all her figure shrunken, like one sick,
Seiz'd with the loathe of some detested drug.

FERDINANDO.

Good signor Carravagio hear my reason.—
This is a matter that involves us all;
Or you, who trespass on untimely hours;
Or wise Teresa here, who serves the countess;
Or I, whom accident brought home so late;
Must first sustain the charge of this great wrong.
It is not fit that we should meddle in't.—
We are not well in circumstances suited.
Each may some truth know in a different way,
And that which each of us apart suspects,

May be as different as we are ourselves.
Wait till the count return; then let us speak.
Teresa's fancy runs on midnight rape;
And you, sir, think, perchance, of robbery;
While I who found the door unbarr'd and entered.—

CARRAVAGIO.

Went you into your lady's room last night?

TERESA.

He did, he did, good signor Carravagio!

FERDINANDO.

Do I deny?—

CARRAVAGIO.

Horrible satyr! cease.
The midnight vision of thee in her chamber,
Had been enough to redden ruby-red,
The diamond purity of such a mind.
Oh! noble lady, virtuous in vain!

FERDINANDO.

Did I not say that he would turn on me?

TERESA.

If he be false, how shall the true be known?
If thou art true, what shape takes villany?

FERDINANDO.

Think you, or you Teresa, or your dame,
To daunt me down by this conspiracy?
It is not, sir, in nature credible,

That a poor menial should unwelcom'd climb,
And love licentious where he dar'd not look.
Guard well yourself good signor Carravagio;
We know your practice at the midnight hour.

## SCENE IX.

CARRAVAGIO *and* TERESA.

CARRAVAGIO.

Let us, Teresa, summon up the house;
Send for the count, and, with some speedy justice,
Avenge this matchless sacrilegious sin.

TERESA.

As yet my lady, sir, has not complain'd:
'Tis true we have her tears and sorrow seen;
But still we know not well what has been done;—
She may be vex'd and yet not greatly rue.

CARRAVAGIO.

You do her wrong, you do her wrong, Teresa.
To such a lofty and majestic mind,
The very utt'rance of her direful taint,
Will be as when the soul forsakes the frame.

TERESA.

See where she comes!

CARRAVAGIO.

How solemn and august!
Like Juno stepping from the throne of Jove.

## SCENE X.

ANTONIA, CARRAVAGIO, *and* TERESA.

ANTONIA.

Good Carravagio, by your leave a moment,—
I would converse with her a little space.
I pray you, Carravagio, for the day
To take command of this ill-fated mansion.
Place special sentinels at all the gates:
Men you can trust. Look well I pray you, signor,
That no one fly; nor least of all that fiend—
See Carravagio, Ferdinando fly not.
And, if you will, send for the count my lord—
Good Carravagio it will be too late.
He will be here;—he will come soon enough!

CARRAVAGIO.

Alas! alas!

## SCENE XI.

ANTONIA *and* TERESA.

ANTONIA.

Why does he weep, Teresa?

TERESA.

Sad fears and bodements hang on all our minds,
And wilder fancies overcome our thoughts,
Than the grim night-mare brings in troubl'd dreams.

ANTONIA.

Last night, Teresa, as I lay asleep,
Methought my noble lord, the Count Urbano,
The Count Urbano, my dear wedded lord,
Came in unheard, and softly sought my couch;
But when I woke before the dawn of day,
I was alone, and sinking back in sleep,
Dreamt that the devil had usurp'd my breast.
The fearful image startled me awake;
And, clearing swift the hazy drouze that still
Hung like a vapour on my faculties,
I had persuasion horrible of things
Which have infected me with desp'rate death.

TERESA.

Oh my dear lady!—Oh! alas! alas!

ANTONIA.

But still bright Hope rose like the hectic bloom,
That tints the cheek of a consuming fair;
And spite of conscious sense beguil'd my wish,
Till I had learnt who had profan'd my room.
Then like the flame that burst upon the sight
Of wretched Hecuba, when she unclos'd
Her window on the final night of Troy,

The hideous certainty shone full upon me,
And show'd the ruin and the sack atchiev'd.

TERESA.

Oh devilish serpent that could so invade
The hallow'd Eden of your wedded faith!

# ACT III.

## SCENE I.

CARRAVAGIO *and* TERESA.

CARRAVAGIO.

The priest has left her: I saw him depart;
He look'd behind just as he left the gate,
And, crossing, heavenward turn'd his eyes and sighed.

TERESA.

May I go in, and ask her how she does?

CARRAVAGIO.

No: patient wait, and leave her till she call.
'Tis impious to pass with curious eye,
Into the sanctu'ry of hopeless sorrow.

TERESA.

Have you sent messengers to bring the count?

CARRAVAGIO.

Not yet, Teresa.

TERESA.

Heavens! why not yet,
When such an hideous outrage has been done?

CARRAVAGIO.

Peace, peace. What has been done, can he undo?

TERESA.

But when do you intend to call him home?

CARRAVAGIO.

Not till the guilty has confession made,
To the content of all th' assembled household,
That she was innocent, and knew him not;
Or till she has decided on her doom.

TERESA.

What mean you, sir? Has she not told us both
That she, to-night, would in the convent lie?

CARRAVAGIO.

But whether as a nun, or with the dead?

TERESA.

You chill my blood. She will not slay herself?

CARRAVAGIO.

She had in thought, before the friar came,
An awful enterprize.

TERESA.

How knew you that?

CARRAVAGIO.

I saw the index written on her brow.

TERESA.

We should not, sir, then leave her long alone.

CARRAVAGIO.

Woman; restrain this eagerness to pry;
Nor with thy pert and seamstress pity, vex
Her solemn magnanimity. Know'st thou
That there are minds of such pure element,

That the alloy'd and current of the world,
Have little common with them but the name;
And hers is of that kind.

TERESA.

But Ferdinando.
How do you mean, sir, to proceed with him?
It is not right to leave him ranging free.—

CARRAVAGIO.

While doubtful of his fate, his mind may change:
He is perplext. To his material soul,
The tragic issue of his flagrant daring,
Is as a new creation. Men like him,
Cannot, in their sublimest fancies, guess
The moods and motives of superior minds.

TERESA.

Why lay such stress, sir, upon his confession?
Do you believe the countess was to blame?

CARRAVAGIO.

No, woman, no: I never thought the thought;
But fame and reputation stand with her
Next in degree to virtue: for the least,
The sacrifice of life were cheap to her.
Did he confess, and place her honour clear,
Her virtue yet might lift her from the soil,
And make her shine the opal of the land.

TERESA.

But where's the need, when we are so convinced,
To place such consequence to his confession?
We may console her if we tell her so.

CARRAVAGIO.

We never can.—Pray thee think less of us.—
Those that but know the palpable of men,
And such compose the throng and crowd of life,
Judge by the fact, and place all in one class,
On whom the law bestows a common name.
She has confess'd adult'ry! Who will pause
To learn the circumstance, nor class her down
With those free wantons, whose lewd highway riots,
Have chang'd the brazen of the lawyer's front,
To blushing copper in th' examination.
But good Teresa, let us quit the theme;
My heart is full, and swelling to distress.
Alas! how little in this world of things,
Are held, the feelings that pervade the heart.
All that high honour and bright recompence
Which should inspire us, and make sweet our toil,
Come by the Alchymy of *have* and *want*,
In the *post obit* value of our works!

## SCENE II.

TERESA, ANTONIA, *and* CARRAVAGIO.

TERESA.

Signor, the countess comes.

ANTONIA.

—Well, Carravagio;
Have you, in all things, done as I desired?

CARRAVAGIO.

I have, my honoured lady,—all—

[redacted]

But one:
He has not yet sent for, my lord, the count.

ANTONIA.

In that omission, he has judged well.—
I thank you, Carravagio: it was wise.

TERESA.

Nor Ferdinando has he yet arrested.

ANTONIA.

Teresa, doubtless he considers well.—
You may retire apart: when there is need,
I will require your presence; but till then—
Teresa?—Go, and lay prepared for me,
The dress of simple white.

TERESA.

Which, my dear lady?

ANTONIA.

That which I wore when I became a bride.

## SCENE III.

ANTONIA *and* CARRAVAGIO.

ANTONIA.

My worthy friend, why falls this shower of sorrow?
What we, afflictions and mischances deem,

Are but the movements of that viewless chain,
On which, dependant from the throne of Heaven,
Hang all inferior and created things.
Nought from the vassalage of fate is free,
But Virtue: she alone exemption boasts,
And in her own allodian grandeur firm,
Denies the claims that Chance and Time pretend.
What! though this fabric crumble into dust,
And with the sentenc'd globe return again
Into the elements, and all to nothing;
That which is I, shall purified ascend,
And with the general vanishing of things,
Behold its dross and blemish pass away.
But come, 'tis fit we should proceed to trial.
Good signor, call the household to attend,
And such esteemed and venerated neighbours,
As by their testimony, may avouch
The high result of what shall come to pass.

CARRAVAGIO.

It is then meet the culprit should attend.

ANTONIA.

Undoubtedly. How! think you otherwise?

CARRAVAGIO.

No, gracious lady; but I feared, the sight
Might wake afresh the anguish of your mind.

ANTONIA.

Good, worthy, Carravagio, that is past;
The struggle done and vanquish'd Shame laid low.

Who is there fashioned in corporeal form,
That I may not with steady eye survey?
Yea not the taunt of my own true-lov'd lord
In giving credence to the menial's tale,
Would disconcert my all-collected mind.

CARRAVAGIO.

Is it your pleasure that the count should come?

ANTONIA.

No, spare me that—I could not bear his grief,
Nor part from him without a painful pang.—
I pray you, friend, be speedy in this task;
For idle time is like a giant's robe,
It loads, perplexes, and exhausts the strength.

## SCENE IV.

CARRAVAGIO.

She has decided as I thought she would.
Alas! alas! but who may dare to thwart
The high resolves of such a soul as hers.

## SCENE V.

TERESA *and* CARRAVAGIO.

TERESA.

Where is the countess gone?—All is prepar'd.

CARRAVAGIO.

Attend you here, and what she may require
Give without speaking, and with lowly service,
Such as befits our mean and abject natures,
When call'd to offices of awful issue.

TERESA.

How is she now?

CARRAVAGIO.

Magnificent! sublime!
Like the archangel on the wall of Heav'n,
Who looking down on our sublunar orb,
Computes the good and ill of human life,
And finds a vast preponderance of ill.

## SCENE VI.

TERESA.

Ah me! that one so fair should fall so foul!
Betray'd unconsciously. She has resolv'd,
To quit the world and pine away a nun:
Doom'd by the crime of Fortune to a jail.—

## SCENE VII.

TERESA *and* FERDINANDO.

TERESA.

Well Ferdinando, this is joyous work;
Thou art in truth a special gay gallant.

FERDINANDO.

To you nor other, will I answer give,
Till face to face with witnesses we meet.—
So! he has sent to call the neighbours in;
And summons up the servants to a show.
Ay, let him call and summon as he may;
The world shall learn who was, or which, to blame.
'Tis shrewd of him, that I must needs admit,
To turn on me and bait me for the scorn.
But fraud is fraud; this will not last them long—
The shallow silvering will soon be bare,
And all the base and counterfeit reveal'd.

TERESA.

You then persist still in your innocence?

FERDINANDO.

I do, and will do, till they shew such proof
As hands may touch, and eyes may look upon.
I am not made so ductile as they deem.

TERESA.

Behold the neighbours and the servants come,
With tearful eyes and faces full of woe;
And Carravagio sadder than them all.

## SCENE VIII.

CARRAVAGIO, TERESA, FERDINANDO, &c.

CARRAVAGIO.

Good friends, by order of our noble lady,
You are assembl'd for a solemn cause.

This house so long, the honour of the land,
Renown'd for hospitality and all
The liberal virtues that should wait on rank,
Has been the scene of a tremendous outrage.
Beneath the masque of darkness, in the guise
Of wedded Confidence, dire Rape last night
Stole in and rifled with opprobrious daring
The chaste embraces of our lady's love.
Th' infernal robber undetected fled;—
But various circumstance, of pointing proof,
Has fix'd the guilty charge on Ferdinando.
For bearing late commission from our lord
He did presume—Oh impious presumption!
To slip the door and glide into her room,
Unheard, unseen, as she defenceless lay,
All in the dark and negligence of sleep.
On this great fact the countess builds her charge—
But lo she comes!—make way—apart—divide.
What mighty grandeur in her form dilates
Beyond the comprehension of our thoughts!

## SCENE IX.

ANTONIA, CARRAVAGIO, TERESA, FERDINANDO, &c.

ANTONIA.

Have you disclosed to them what has mischanced?

CARRAVAGIO.

I have performed all to the point commanded;
Would you that I should still proceed in it?

ANTONIA.

It might for delicacy be as well—
But no: I will myself. My worthy friends,
In common wrongs, such as may fall on all,
We may entrust the agency of others;
And purchas'd advocacy may avail.
But in my dire unprecedented case,
I should impair my own preserv'd esteem,
Preserv'd unspotted in th' unconscious sin,
Could I forego my painful vindication,
Ferdinando.—

FERDINANDO.

Madam.—

ANTONIA.

Do you confess?

FERDINANDO.

That I did pass into your room, I do;
That I know well my lord was wrong'd last night,
I also must declare.

TERESA.

To me he said,
That when he entered he believed you knew

ANTONIA.

When the time comes to ask for your report,
Then tell your knowledge.—Yes, I know full well
That in the world the guilt will so be thought.—
Do you confess?

FERDINANDO.

How! that I did the wrong?

CARRAVAGIO.

Out with the quibble, sir—out with it all.
I see it working in thy alt'ring visage.

ANTONIA.

Let him proceed.—What though he dare pretend
That in the crime the blame must rest on me,
I but desire confession of the fact.
Do you confess?—Still blush you to atone?

CARRAVAGIO.

Give way, give way, O miserable man!
To the contrition that begins to rise.

ANTONIA.

Turn, turn, O turn thee from thy fatal lapse,
And strive to reach the upward tract again.
The path of vice lies with inviting slope
Down the declivity; and every step
Is smoother, easier, lower still and lower,
Till nothing from the headlong fall can save.
In mercy to thyself confession make.

TERESA.

The fiercest tortures, penal craft employs,
To wrench out secrets from the clenched knave,
Will tear the truth from thy obdurate breast.

ANTONIA.

Patience, Teresa, cherish milder thoughts,
And e'en in injury benev'lence own.
Benevolence is like the glorious sun,
Whose free impartial splendour fosters all:
It is the radiance of the human soul,
The proof and sign of its celestial birth.
All other creatures of corporeal ore,
Partake the common qualities of man:
Love, hatred, anger, all particular aims!
But in this infinite and pure effusion,
This only passion of divinity,
He grows the rival of the heav'nly God.—
Do you confess?

FERDINANDO.

What is't I should confess?—
What is this sin, this robbery, this wrong?
Where is the loss? Where is the detriment?
When theft is wrought a certain void is left;
When malice strikes, a wound or blain appears;
Wrong ever comes in manifest effect;
But this is fantasy, or falsely charged.

ANTONIA.

Behold, thou shrewd equivocating fiend,
The test thou dar'st desire—

TERESA.

Oh! horror! horror!
She has stabb'd herself!—

ANTONIA.

Wilt thou yet confess?

TERESA.

Help! help!—fly all ye wond'ring—

ANTONIA.

Silence, woman;
Attend thy duty, and support me here.
This is no time for idle exclamation.—
I want but yet the pleasure ere I die,
To hear him say he uninvited came.
But if too rapid, ebb my streaming life,
May this dread act, my only sure appeal,
Deter the sullying Slander from my fame.

TERESA.

See how the sheety pale of death appears,
On that bright face that tempted thee to sin.

ANTONIA.

Woman, forbear; nor once again presume
To breathe allusion to the fatal theme.—
Think you he will confess?

CARRAVAGIO.

I think he will.

ANTONIA.

Would he were speedy, for I faint apace.
My eyes grow dim—God bless you, worthy friends.
Commend me, signor, to my dearest lord.

TERESA.

Alas! alas! she dies!—

CARRAVAGIO.

It is away!—
Her pure and heav'nly spirit is away.
Oh! it has flown like a poor frighten'd bird,
Appealing to the Heavens against the hand
That plunder'd ruthlessly its early nest.—
Friends, let us quit this theatre of blood,
With the sad moral graven on our hearts.
One guilty act is parent to a race;
And the last born still more detestable,
In bent and form than all that did precede.

TERESA.

What would'st thou with the knife? Its sheath of blood,
Wert thou a man of human mould compos'd,
Would be like mortal pestilence to thee.

CARRAVAGIO.

Rouse thee, poor wretch! from thy astonishment;
There is no visionary horror here.

The fatal steel in thy amazed sight,
So dropping rubies is no magic fiction;
Nor this fair casket, that so late contained
A glorious gem by Heav'ns own master placed,
A dreamy show; but all reality.—
Tortures await thee.—

FERDINANDO.

Thus from them I fly.

END.

# CLYTEMNESTRA,

A

TRAGEDY.

# CHARACTERS.

ORESTES.
PYLADES.
EGYSTHUS.

ELECTRA.
CLYTEMNESTRA.

*The Stage represents an open space near the Palace, and the Temple of Phœbus in Argos.*

# CLYTEMNESTRA.

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

ORESTES.

Now has the great predestined day arriv'd,
When by thy aid, O ever-radiant Phœbus,
Orestes must his destiny fulfil.
Tremendous destiny! that gives my hand
The matricidal knife!—Make firm my heart,
And to th' avenging of my father's death,
On her that bore me, grant such note and fame
To the dread act, that never guilt again,
Like Clytemnestra's, may surprize the world.
O Agamemnon! my heroic sire!
Could not the charm of thy atchiev'd renown
Restrain th' adultress!—Scarce from Troy return'd,
To be so murder'd,—and myself, poor babe!
To clear the kingdom for the lewd Egysthus,

Before my birth was sentenced to be slain,
But by the nurse who had my father rear'd,
Sav'd; and while yet unswaddled, sent by night
To my sad uncle's court. His kindly care
Bred me to manhood; but the Gods convinc'd
My early youth that they had work for me.
Blood will have blood. My father's claims the blow,
And my own wrongs extenuate the deed.

## SCENE II.

ORESTES *and* PYLADES.

ORESTES.

Well, my Pylades, have you seen my sister?
How does she fare in the maternal brothel?

PYLADES.

As a bright jewel among offal cast,
Her native purity remains unchang'd.
She lives apart a pious pensive life,
And weeps unheard her guilty mother's sin.

ORESTES.

And what of her, and the abhorr'd Egysthus?

PYLADES.

Rather than ask, imagine. Nothing chang'd
Is the wild flame of Clytemnestra's passion;
Though every day th' opprobrious paramour,
Insulting nature might provoke her scorn.

ORESTES.

And does my sister but bewail the guilt?
A loftier spirit better would become,
Atrides issue and exalted blood.

PYLADES.

But gentle is the fair Electra's soul,
And in her bosom, full of heavy sorrow,
The vex of indignation never stirs.—
Her meek and unrepining spirit shows
A holy brightness in its clouded sphere;
Like the pale moon that on the vapoury earth,
Sheds without heat the pure celestial light.

ORESTES.

Methinks I should have more courageous felt,
Did she possess the temper of revenge
To urge me if I shrunk.

PYLADES.

Have I not sworn
To bear my part, in this just enterprize,
Against Egysthus?

ORESTES.

——But high fate ordains
A greater act; and Agamemnon's shade
Demands a sacrifice to match his death.

PYLADES.

What mean you?

ORESTES.

—Justice.

PYLADES.

How!

ORESTES.

Full retribution.

PYLADES.

On whom?

ORESTES.

The guilty.

PYLADES.

What! your mother?

ORESTES.

Yes.—

Why turn you pale and look on me so strange?
I am Orestes! Agamemnon's son!
With him th' immortal halo first was thrown,
Around the helmed head of bloody war;
And men, up-rising from their sordid aims,
Were taught that wounds, yea death itself was gain,
When found in battle fought but for renown.
The unborn races of the utmost times,
The last circumf'rence of posterity,
Will sound applause to Agamemnon's name.
But he, with all his glory in its noon,
Was, by the demon of accurst desire,
Torn from his sphere, and like a falling star,

Extinguish'd in the world's astonished gaze;
And should not such a crime be all reveng'd?

PYLADES.

Think, Clytemnestra is your mother,—think.

ORESTES.

But justice no propinquity respects;
And fate, by all the tenour of my life,
Has shown me fashion'd for a solemn end.
Know! Heav'n at times sends forth predestined men
To stir the world, and from the sensual foul
To cleanse th' immortal element of thought.
Of such were Hercules and Theseus.
What toils they bore to rid the earth o'errun,
With hideous offspring of perverted passion!
My conscious spirit claims to rank itself
With their high phalanx, and by some great act
To give an epocha to history;
That sages wond'ring o'er the past may say,
" Such was the world before Orestes' time;
But his high-aim'd atchievement changing all;
Crimes, bold and catching once, like strange diseases,
Grew mild and vanish'd from the frame of man."

PYLADES.

Sublime! Incomprehensible! This strange
And warm enthusiasm that pervades
Thy lofty spirit, has transform'd thy nature,
Lighting a purpose dark and terrible,

With such a flame of holy charity,
That I am aw'd, and tremble at thy virtue.
Thou art no more, Orestes! he with whom
My youthful pastimes were so gaily spent!
But I have sworn to be as true to this,
In his great business, as his own right hand.—
Lo, where your sister, fair Electra comes.

## SCENE III.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, *and* PYLADES.

ELECTRA.

My noble brother—

ORESTES.

Rise, Electra, rise:
Too long the daughter of the king of heroes,
Has bent in lowliness and pined forlorn.
Why knelt you thus to me?

ELECTRA.

Your mien, Orestes,
O'erawes my spirit; and my heart foregone,
The joyous throb with which I sought you here,
Stands in my bosom, fearful and restrained,
As if I saw, incarnated in you,
The energy of an avenging God.
But wherefore here, at this most perilous hour?
This is the portico of Phœbus' temple.—

ORESTES.

Hail holy temple of my guardian God!

ELECTRA.

And daily, as the sun ascends to noon,
The vot'ries still their pious visits pay.
But though no more the guilty court esteems
The God or worship, here Egysthus's spies,
Keep constant watch, and list with greedy ear,
E'en to the tenour of the pilgrim's prayer.
Retire my brother; shun their deadly sight;
Come when 'tis dark, and I will meet you then.

ORESTES.

I know the danger, but I trust the Gods
And my own destiny. Full well I know,
That the usurper, conscious of his crimes,
And dreading retribution, has contrived
A subtile and infernal enginry,
To crush the fruit of justice in the germ.

ELECTRA.

There's not a place it does not penetrate.
The sacred temples hold the tyrant's echoes.—
Know you, Egysthus has already heard
The number and equipment of your men?

ORESTES.

But of our enterprize he cannot know.

PYLADES.

Rumour is taught, that we advance ourselves
In quest of labours and romantic feats.

ORESTES.

Has not Egysthus heard of this?

ELECTRA.

He has.

ORESTES.

And laughs at us?

PYLADES.

Is it not so, Electra?

ELECTRA.

I never enter in the Tyrant's circle.
My feminine and simple pray'r is still,
That all your purposes may be for good,
And for their aim, be prosper'd by the Gods.

ORESTES.

What! though they mock at us, my dear Pylades,
They know us not, nor can their downward thoughts
Conceive the scope and motives of our daring.
Let them laugh on, while we pass to the goal
Of our magnificent and awful purpose.

ELECTRA.

But here, Orestes, do not linger now.
The very air is here a whisperer;
And as the viewless arrows of the pest,
The unknown ministers of vengeance speed,
And give the death before the victims feel,
Or fear themselves infected.—Stay not here.

ORESTES.

You must, Electra, then be spy for us.
The troops are waiting in the mountain pass,
With all prepared, the signals and the signs.
Pylades, safe in his disguise, will here
Attend your intimations. In the temple,
I will the anxious interval employ.

## SCENE IV.

ELECTRA *and* PYLADES.

ELECTRA.

Come, gentle cousin, let me lean on thee.
My heart shrinks in me. All the glowing joy
With which I heard Orestes was arrived,
Is changed into a chilling apprehension.

PYLADES.

Be more of heart; take courage from the hope
That leads our bold adventure. Rouse yourself
With the remembrance of your injuries.

ELECTRA.

I have so long on bitter sorrow fared,
That hope which should with chearfulness inspire,
Like opiates, faithless to the fever'd brain,
Has heighten'd my disease. If ye should fail,
What may the fell usurper not attempt?
Already, from my lost unhappy mother,

His eye regardless roves; and I have felt
With sad abhorrence, his impassioned glance,
Flame on my conscious cheek.

PYLADES.

This day, Electra,
Will end your suffering and rebuild your fortune.

ELECTRA.

Yes; or forever desolate my hopes.
I was the worshipp'd daughter of a king,
But now I am below all slavery!

PYLADES.

Why yield you, gentle, to this sickly thought;
The cloud that has so long obscur'd your lustre,
Is swiftly passing, and the world again
Will own your regal brightness.

ELECTRA.

Ah Pylades;
Fortune may change the hues of outward show,
But cannot 'raze the truths engraven here.

PYLADES.

Ha! Who is this?

ELECTRA.

Egysthus! save yourself!

## SCENE V.

EGYSTHUS *and* ELECTRA.

EGYSTHUS.

Why turn you from me, and deny my sight,
The Heav'nly radiance of your gentle eyes?
What, though Orestes be no more?—

ELECTRA.

What he?

EGYSTHUS.

So says the rumour. Flesh is frail and mortal.
Nor tears, nor love itself that conquers all,
Can bribe the stern and greedy miser, Death,
E'er to unlock the coffer of the grave,
And give one jewel from his hoarded treasures.

ELECTRA.

When did he die? How came the tidings here?

EGYSTHUS.

'Tis said, that he, gone errant with Pylades,
Fell in some battle near the spartan border.

ELECTRA.

If he fell nobly, he fell not too soon.
What is there here, in this rude world of time,
But shocks, and turbulence, and pain, and sorrow.

EGYSTHUS.

You seem content, nor look as one that hears
Such tidings of a brother. How is this?

ELECTRA.

He had but tasted bitterness and grief;
What joy had he to lose? What cause have I
To mourn for one that has escaped from woe?

EGYSTHUS.

Ah, pensive fair; could I but minister
To thy solace, and from this chance of fate,
Draw hope or comfort to a lover's heart!

ELECTRA.

What would you, sir? I pray you, let me pass.

EGYSTHUS.

Console you; and in sympathy unite,
My kindest soothing to allay your sorrow.

ELECTRA.

My mother, sir, needs more your consolation.—
I pray unhand me, that I may retire?

EGYSTHUS.

Sweetest Electra, why so shy and perverse?
Why would'st thou tear from me, thy gentle hand?
Why, with thy scorn, so harshly wring my heart;
My wounded heart, that but thy smiles can cure!

ELECTRA.

Abhorr'd Incestuous! Heav'n! give me strength
To shake the monster from his loathsome hold.

EGYSTHUS.

This maiden artifice improves thy beauties.
Me-thinks the virgin glow upon thy cheek,
Deepens to ripeness, tempting to be gathered.—
O sure, these nimble sparklings of thine eyes,
Glance more of love than scorn.

ELECTRA.

Hence! dreadful man.
O Gods! by what unnat'ral transmutation
Of nature and of reason, does this wretch,
Foul with my father's blood, and from the couch
Of my ill-fated mother, newly risen,
Breathe this pollution in my tingling ears.

EGYSTHUS.

Less indignation, fair, disdainful maid.
Orestes' death leaves me free king of Argos,
And what I will, I may.—

ELECTRA.

Orestes' death!
Think'st thou, the righteous and tremendous Gods,
Had only him to be thy punisher?
Tyrant! beware and tremble; on thee fast
Rolls the inevitable vengeance down,
Like burning lava, dark, with clouds o'erspread.

## SCENE VI.

CLYTEMNESTRA *and* EGYSTHUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Dearest Egysthus! now art thou all king.
The rabble vulgar, who refused the name,
Will, at the tidings of Orestes' death,
Confer it freely.

EGYSTHUS.

Thou hast a stout heart,
To wear such blithesome ruddy on thy cheeks,
When tears should bleach them for a gallant son.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas! you ill requite me. Oh! Egysthus,
The masterful and cherish'd love for thee,
Has drained the mother's nature from my breast.
Have I not doted so intensely on thee,
That all regard of duty, vows, and fame,
Have been as vile impediments push'd by,
That I might take thee with a larger grasp?

EGYSTHUS.

Come, come, dear wife; take not my words so sadly,
I meant no taunt.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But I, with anxious pain,
See oft thy eyes to other women stray.

EGYSTHUS.

No chidings, dame.—If this day's news prove true,
I'll make our Argos blaze, as bright again
As on your wedding-day with Agamemnon.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Why name him to me? Oh! let him, Egysthus,
Lie quiet in that bloody sepulchre,
Where we, untimely laid him. His grim shade
That nightly visits my perturbed sleep,
Needs not the aid of your remorseless slight,
To barb its dread reproach.

EGYSTHUS.

What, penitent!
Now, this is but a woman's shallow trick,
To hide your jealousy. Dear Clytemnestra,
Love, once departed, will not come again,
By showing him the chaff of former fare.
Cupid has wings, the poets say, to fly:
Though, like the bee, he roves from flower to flower,
He will not always feed on cloying sweet.
Knowest thou, fair, that fondness may grow flat,
And smack of staleness too, yea turn to sour.
Come! learn philosophy; 'tis time you should.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Tis time, indeed, when I am taught by you!

# ACT II.

## SCENE I.

ORESTES.

I am as one that swims a river's tide—
Swept by the stream, my efforts all in vain.
O that I never had been born! or that
The fate-controuling Deities had held
My mother from her crimes. Had she but shed
One glimpse of kindness on my helpless childhood;
One smile, such as the nursing menial smiles,
In simple-hearted fondness on the babe;
I might have felt some soft-restraining tie.
But Fate, which has with dreadful parricide,
Incarnadin'd my destiny, appears
By the great plea of her deficiencies,
To blanch the horror of it from my mind;—
So large and universal has the want
Of all maternal been in her to me.

## SCENE II.

ORESTES, ELECTRA *and* PYLADES.

ORESTES.

How now Pylades? And Electra here!
Is this a time for wooing blandishments?

I thought my friend had been of purer mould,
Than in the turn and crisis of my life,
To yield to such soft weakness.

ELECTRA.

—Oh Orestes!—

ORESTES.

And thou too damsel, dar'st thou entertain
The smiling flatt'ry of a lover's suit,
While Heav'ns great ministers are all astir,
And on their thrones, th' eternal Gods themselves
Stand up expectant of a dreadful scene,—
Th' avenging of thy sire? His restless shade
Walks round us here, and frowns to see thee thus.

PYLADES.

Forbear Orestes; this unjust reproach—
Electra seeks but to escape the foul
And insolent Egysthus.

ORESTES.

Say'st thou so?

ELECTRA.

Oft has he glanc'd from his presumptuous eyes
A fervent, strange familiarity,
That thrill'd in horror through my trembling frame.

PYLADES.

To-day emboldén'd by the rumour'd fiction
Of our defeat and fall in Lacedemon,
He dar'd to give his hideous passion words.

ORESTES.

Lie quiet yet awhile, impatient Sword!
Thou see'st, Pylades, 'tis as I have said;
My destiny is clear. What monstrous shames
Are rife among us: but, the end is come.
Behold in Heav'n th' appointed sign display'd.
The sun is smitten with the promis'd darkness;
And when the gloom is rounded and compleat,
Then shall be done that dread predestin'd deed,
Which, ever sounding to the utmost time,
Will wake the echoes of posterity!

ELECTRA.

O ye deep-working and mysterious Powers!
That 'tend on nature, in this great probation,
Sustain my weakness.

PYLADES.

By what prescience,
Hast thou, Orestes, known the coming on
Of this portentous sign; thus to unite
The issue of our purpose and the omen?
Though we have grown from boyhood up together,
Shar'd the same sports, the same instruction drawn,
Slept in one chamber, at one table far'd,
And been in all things free and confident,
As if one mind our sev'ral natures sway'd,
'Till the first scheme of this thy high intent;
Thou dost my thoughts with wonder so amaze,

That while I should thee better know than others,
There is no other still so strange to me.

ORESTES.

Do you remember ought that chanc'd to us
Upon the day of that recorded night,
On which you swore to link your fate to mine,
In the great enterprize that brings us here?

PYLADES.

Were we not hunting the nemean boar,
With certain nobles of my father's court?

ORESTES.

Ay, and had pitch'd our tents upon the hill,
Fronting the sea-indented Salamis.

PYLADES.

I have the spot all painted in my mind,
'Twas scarce a bow-shot from the little temple,
Which an old mariner of Negara,
In gratitude for some escape at sea,
Had rais'd to Neptune and the God of day,
Serving their rites himself. And now I think,
You came not with us to the woods that day,
But went to see the hoary mariner.

ORESTES.

Him often since I have re-visited.

PYLADES.

When I return'd, I found you sad and moody,
And then it was you spoke of this design.

ORESTES.

That antient mariner had in his day,
Seen many wonders of the sea and land,
And learnt mirac'lous science. He had pass'd
Beyond th' Aurora of our western world,
To where the orient kings on opal walk:
And with the bold Phœnecians he had sail'd,
To where the long-foreseeing Druids teach
The untamed Britons, that within the oak,
The guardian spirit of their isle resides.
Deep was he vers'd in starry processes,
And could predict by hieroglyphic skill,
The fortunes and the accidents of men.
Seeing me thoughtful and diseased at heart
To be this offcast from the ties of nature,
He ey'd me kindly, often question'd me
With curious inquisition, and essay'd
To find if ever in my youthful breast,
Insidious Love had its sedition sown.
When he had found me honest, free and chaste,
He took his tablets, and by mystic signs,
And antique emblems keenly scrutinized,
Told me that fate had form'd me to avenge
My father's death, and Heav'ns justice deal
Against my guilty mother:—bidding me,
Momentous aspects of the air and sky,
Nightly to note; nor to advance myself,
Till thrice three hundred days were past and gone.

Then if my resolution lasted firm,
To be at Argos on this day prepar'd;
When glorious Phœbus in the bright of noon,
Would veil his light, in signal of approval.
And lo! the God assumes the gloom predicted!

PYLADES.

How was't you told me not of this before?

ORESTES.

My heart long doubtful, scarcely to this hour
Was nerv'd for the dread feat. But yon eclipse
Has all the wav'ring hues of hesitation,
By its deep influence fix'd in one black.

ELECTRA.

Ha! fly Orestes—hasten from this spot.
It is the queen that comes.

ORESTES.

—Oh! Gods! my mother!
Retire Pylades; let me look at her.

## SCENE III.

ORESTES *and* ELECTRA.

ORESTES.

Oh! that the Heav'ns should in a form so noble,
Have lodg'd a heart so foul. Majestic ruin!
Fain would I bend the filial knee before thee,
But the stern purpose that I come upon

Stifles the new-felt rev'rence as it stirs.
O mother, mother, did my melting soul
Retain one trace, but one of kindness from thee,
I would my terrible intent forego,
And at thy feet contend with destiny.

## SCENE IV.

CLYTEMNESTRA *and* ELECTRA. (ORESTES *apart.*)

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Canst thou unmov'd behold the God of day,
Shorn of his glory in the bright of noon?
The dark'ning prodigy still spreads apace.
The town is forth; and from the palace tower
The streets with wan and wond'ring faces seem
As thickly pav'd as with the wonted stones;
The cheek of life resigns the beauteous bloom,
And takes the ghastly ashy of the dead;
The hills frown black; the distant sea foregoes
Its heav'nly azure for a dismal red;
The fields are chang'd, and for their cheerful green
Assume a sullen supernat'ral hue;
And solitary pasturing herds, in bands,
Come to the gates, and seek protecting man.

ELECTRA.

Portents and omens ever have been held
The harbingers of change. Yon black eclipse

Is but the forecast frown of some stern God,
In wrath descending for his rites profaned.
Now may the guilty quake.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Whom dost thou mean?
What guilty? Whom? Dost thou mean me, Electra?

ELECTRA.

The conscious heart beneath such augury
Confesses to itself. You are the queen,
And ought to know; or knowing not should learn,
Why this portentous gloom appaling falls.
The solemn Gods deal in no idle pageants.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Twas but the chance of birth that made me queen.
I hold from nature no inheritance,
Above the frailties of the common race;
Food, sleep and pastime are as sweet to me,
As to the meanest slave that fears my frown.
Then why should I, so palpable to all
The ails and accidents of vulgar clay,
Believe that Heav'n takes stricter note of me,
Because my head sustains a glitt'ring toy,
And from my shoulders somewhat fuller hang
These two three spans of madder-tinctured robe,
Made from the cast-off mantle of a ewe!
I am a woman, made with woman's weakness.

ELECTRA.

My father, Agamemnon, wise men say,
Did, by the virtue of his great atchievements,
Exalt the aims and motives of mankind:
You! O my mother! were his honour'd wife.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But he is dead; what is th' eclipse to him?

ELECTRA.

To him, 'tis true, all changes are alike;
The fears that shake us, and the ills that harm,
Effectless pass o'er his oblivious dust.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Electra! wherefore do you taunt me so?

ELECTRA.

Alas! I only mourn my father dead.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Maiden! how now? Dost thou forget thy mother?

ELECTRA.

Were you not too the mother of Orestes?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Art thou my child, and dar'st upbraid me so?

ELECTRA.

The rude accuser wakes within yourself!
My heart weeps blood; and when I turn my eyes
To yon portentous blotting of the noon,

And think what dire reverse of moral nature
Reigns in our Argos, terror fills my breast.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

My child, my child, you sorely probe my heart;
Nor longer can I, to myself, appease
The terrible conviction of my guilt.
It flames before me, fierce as Phlegethon;
And now me-thinks I see, rising around,
The hideous brood of Acheron and Chaos,
Rearing their fiery snakes to drive me hence.—
Oh! my Electra, fain my blushing soul
Would make confession of its shame to thee;
But never can thy gentle spirit know,
The dreadful contest that is rending mine.
To-day, Egysthus, whose departed love
I long have miss'd, in many cold neglects,
Has scorn'd me openly, e'en while I felt
Unnat'ral joy, that, by Orestes's death,
He might possess an unmolested throne.

ELECTRA.

And he, to-day, made horrible my hearing,
With hideous proffer of detested love.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Egysthus! love! did'st thou say, love to thee?
Art thou Electra, not the child I bore?—
O monster! monster! But all falls astray,
And noon turn'd night, is the least fearful change.
Strike! Heav'n, strike! and let me know no more.

Wilt thou submit thee to his curs'd embrace?
I'll tear thee from him like a hungry tyger;
Rive thee to joints; and on thy father's tomb,
Burn thy unhallow'd and incestuous bones,
To pacify the pale repining shade.
Oh! Agamemnon, thou art well reveng'd.

ELECTRA.

Orestes nears and waves me to retire.

ORESTES.

Hail Clytemnestra! royal murd'ress hail!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Do I not dream; or what dread sounds are these?
Comes Agamemnon from the tomb to chide?

ORESTES.

Orestes' mother, hail! or by thy honour'd title,
Egysthus' dame! must I entice thy ear?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Again, O Gods! he comes.

ORESTES.

Wilt thou not speak?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

What would'st thou, restless and reproachful ghost?
I am prepar'd.—The spell of sin is o'er,
And Conscience wak'ning, wildly rings my doom.

ORESTES.

Where is thy son?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Has he not joined thee yet?

ORESTES.

He comes! The mighty Gods themselves have plac'd
Their gleaming vengeance in his fated grasp.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh! can my mis'ry yet such bitter want,
That I must fall by his unfilial arm?

ORESTES.

Did'st thou not first, these dire inversions prove?
Thou did'st, Unnatural! to-day, rejoice
In the reported death of this same son,
From whom thou dar'st to claim a mother's rights.
Behold how wide the reprobation works!
The glorious sun is fading to a blot
In the mid Heav'n of noon, as if he shunn'd
The pestilence which thy example lewd,
Has rais'd in Argos. Know'st thou not, to-day,
That thy Egysthus; thy fam'd spouse! Egysthus,
Has breath'd the loathsome fervor of his love
To thy own daughter? Yet thy doting eyes
Look on him fondly.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Cease, perturbed shade.
To-day, forever from my tortur'd bosom,
I cast him forth; and penitence and woe,
For all the wretched remnant of my life,

Shall feed upon me, till my wasted frame
Has done atonement for its guilty passion.

ORESTES.

Infirm and fleeting that contrition is,
Which shame of mortified denial breeds.
Springs thine from hatred of thy own desires?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thy scrutinizing inquisition, shows
A fearful glass to my convicted soul.—
I dare not look on my deformity.
Upbraid no more, but with thy deadly hand,
Seize and convey me to thy shadowy home.

ORESTES.

Then yield thyself.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O Gods!

ELECTRA.

She faints; help! help!

## SCENE V.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, *and* EGYSTHUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh! my Electra; and is it away?

EGYSTHUS.

What Clytemnestra?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ha! com'st thou here too?
Avaunt! abhorr'd: there's torment in thy touch.
Hence! lest the awful and vindictive ghost,
Transform itself into wide-wrapping flame,
And mix our ashes in one sudden doom.

EGYSTHUS.

What can she mean, Electra?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Is it so?
And dar'st thou woo her in my very sight?
Blaze forth again to vision, dreadful form,
And save thy innocent and blameless child,
From the enchanting venom of his tongue.—
Deem not thy virtue firmer than thy mother's;
For I was bound by holy charm of vows,
To one whose name should have been charm enough,
Against the conjurations of the sense.
Sure, I was drawn, by worse than sorcery,
To plot my husband's death, and drench my sleeves
Deep in the flowing ruby of his blood.
E'en now thy father, all magnificent,
Before me stood, as when he sail'd for Troy:
His armour sounding as he mov'd along
Tow'ring refulgent. In his searching eyes,
Me-thought a sad and wat'ry pity hung,
That kindly mercified their angry fires.

EGYSTHUS.

'Twas but a phantom of thy fever'd fancy:
The self same substance as the nightly dreams
That chace thy needful sleep.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Beware, Egysthus; yet repress the smile
That grows to mock'ry on thy jutting lip.
Such visitations are not idly made;
And see the sun on his meridian throne,
Spreads a black signal to the world of men.

# ACT III.

## SCENE I.

PYLADES *and* ORESTES.

PYLADES.

By time it should be nigh the noon of day,
But night portentous has usurp'd the sky.
All birds are bower'd save witching Hecat's bird,
The bat that, in its murky flutter, shrieks
A shrill amen to the ill owlet's bode.
The sun has dwindled to an edge of light,
And seems the glitt'ring remnant of a ring.
Heav'n's lamps as in the midnight are lit up:
But in the preternatural reverse,
That seizes all; their constellated fires
Present the aspect of th' autumnal sky.

ORESTES.

How now, Pylades! art thou stricken too?

PYLADES.

In truth, Orestes, something much like fear,
Chilly and pale upon my fancy creeping,
Daunts from my heart its wonted confidence.

ORESTES.

Bear up man, and take courage from the sign;
It suits our awful enterprize, and shows
The Gods auspicious. What we aim to do,
Is such a deed that, with less sanctioning,
We might have deem'd it of another stamp.
But all these pageants of the ominous sky,
Prove that the Heav'ns have interest in our purpose.

## SCENE II.

ORESTES, ELECTRA *and* PYLADES.

ORESTES.

My sister! how is this? What would'st thou here?
This is no place now for thee to abide.
The troops are posted.—To thy room again;—
Our business ill thy gentle nature suits.

ELECTRA.

O my Orestes! let me stay with thee.
Alone I dare not trust my busy thoughts.
Unutterable fears, suggestions dire,
And cogitations of unhallow'd scope,
In spite of reason glide into my mind.
All seems unnat'ral, e'en the Gods are serv'd
With rites and worship reprobate and grim.
The glorious Phœbus, like dark Hecaté,
Is hail'd in orgies ghastly and obscure:
The fearful crowds with torches glaring flame,

Rush to his temple; howling and sad cries
Are heard for tuneful hymns; and clotted gore
Of felon victims, manacled with iron,
Dragg'd from the dungeons and in fury torn,
Besmear the silver altars of the God.

PYLADES.

Gentle Electra droop not so dismay'd.

ORESTES.

You know not yet the soul-inspiring cheer
Of these celestial assurances.
By such dread prodigies in heav'n and earth
Mysterious providence controuls mankind.
Let no one say such things are negative.

ELECTRA.

Thy mind, dear brother, teems with dark conceits.
I understand thee not, or wish I may not.

ORESTES.

Go to thy chamber, and abide our call.
Pylades lead her.—I will to the men,
Lest they too catch the horror of the time.

## SCENE III.

ELECTRA *and* PYLADES.

ELECTRA.

I will not go, Pylades; rather here
Let me be witness to the worst I think,

Than haunted by the demon of my fears.
O that I could but freely speak to him!
But when I would he seems to look on me,
With such endurance as a mother views,
The aimless pastime of her ideot child.

PYLADES.

What would you say to him? would you restrain
The mighty justice that has brought him here?

ELECTRA.

I think Orestes has a mind most noble?—

PYLADES.

Truly so, and virtuous passing man.

ELECTRA.

'Tis but the height of his stupendous worth,
That breeds in me this terrible alarm.

PYLADES.

He to the acts of his decided purpose,
Moves with the equanimity of Jove.
Sweet! what is this? Why spring these sudden tears?

ELECTRA.

When the heart's full the eyes will overflow.—
Alas! that I should yield to such conceits.

PYLADES.

To what, Electra?

ELECTRA.

Ever to suspect
The sanctity of his superior nature.
Why should his heav'nly magnanimity
Beget in me this fear.

PYLADES.

Fear! how? What fear?

ELECTRA.

O why, Pylades, does his moody thought
Seem less against the doom'd Egysthus bent,
Than on the guilt of his unhappy mother;
And this magnificence of sign and omen?

PYLADES.

He views Egysthus as the murd'rous knife:
But Clytemnestra was the urging hand.

ELECTRA.

O that he were not so juridical!—
You are his friend, his bosom friend, Pylades;
The full confided partner of his thoughts—

PYLADES.

Ha! wherefore trembling grasp you thus my arm.

ELECTRA.

Answer me truly.

PYLADES.

——What would you, Electra?

ELECTRA.

Oh sure, Oh sure, we have had crimes enough.

PYLADES.

Alas!—

ELECTRA.

Then it is so!—O gentle Death!
Shut up my sense from this catastrophe.

## SCENE IV.

ORESTES, PYLADES, *and* ELECTRA.

ORESTES.

Still here, Pylades! with Electra here!
How now Infirm! Is this thy vow to me?
And thou, pale girl, why would'st thou wond'ring stand
In the great thoroughfare of Fate and Death?
Hence to thy distaff or to pray'r. Pylades,
Look how the sun is to a twinkle shrunk.
When all is quench'd to our terrestrial vision,
I'll strike upon my shield. Be you prepar'd,
For at the signal's sound, the men, behind
The colonades, will to the storming rush.

ELECTRA.

Orestes, O my brother!—

ORESTES.

How! still here!
Into the temple, child, or to thy chamber.

Here is no place for thee, nor time for words—
Ha! who are these that from the palace come?—
Swift to thy post, Pylades—I to mine.

## SCENE V.

ELECTRA.

O ye dread deities, this work is yours!
It is my wretched mother, and Egysthus,
Sent helpless here for their own sacrifice;
With all the train of pliant priests that gave
A guilty acquiescence to their sin.
Alas! alas! with what despairing looks,
She frequent turns, and eyes the blacken'd sun:
Herself too chang'd from all imperial show.

## SCENE VI.

CLYTEMNESTRA, EGYSTHUS, ELECTRA, *Priests and Torch-Bearers.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Electra, O Electra, stand'st thou here
With thy undaunted innocence to shame us!
Look on her now, and if thou can'st, Egysthus,
Beneath these dismal prodigies of Heaven,
Find courage still to love, now woo and win.

## SCENE VII.

CLYTEMNESTRA, EGYSTHUS, ELECTRA, ORESTES, *and* PYLADES.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ha! Agamemnon, come again to chide!—

EGYSTHUS.

Who? What art thou?

ELECTRA.

O mother, 'tis Orestes.

EGYSTHUS.

Orestes! and alive!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Twas then no vision!

EGYSTHUS.

Guards! guards!

ELECTRA.

Fly, mother, fly.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Am I awake!
What means this clang, like Jove's own thunder peal?

EGYSTHUS.

Has he sown here the Theban's dragon teeth,
That these grim soldiers in full panoply,
Start up around us like an apparition?

ORESTES.

Pylades seize him!

EGYSTHUS.

First secure thyself.—

ORESTES.

Audacious dog! and darest thou strike at me?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Spare him, Orestes, O in mercy spare—

ORESTES.

Ill-fated sure art thou to use the word!
Mercy to him by whose accursed stroke,
My royal father in his glory fell!
Mercy to him by whose detested wiles,
My mother was unmother'd to myself!
Mercy to him who with incestuous pray'r,
Did the chaste hearing of thy child amaze!
No: cruelty by every fury mixt.—
Die monster, die!—Now murderess prepare—

ELECTRA.

Pylades! O Pylades! yet arrest——

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Orestes! son! what would'st thou do to me?—

PYLADES.

O stay, O stay, the parricidal blow.—
If the dread Gods for their offended justice
Demand atonement, they have power to take,
Without the horror of thy ageney.

'Tis not for thee, so knit by the great ties
Of blood and nature, thus, for her offence,
To bear the warrant, or to strike the doom.

ORESTES.

Pylades! when I first proposed to thee,
This work of justice that we now perform,
Thou did'st, by all the deities of Light,
And each particular energy of Hell,
Nam'd one by one, swear to proceed with me,
To the extremest verge of my intent,
As willing, ready, and commandable
As this my own right hand. Such was thy oath.

PYLADES.

It was, Orestes; but my fancy never
Conceiv'd the aim of thy revenge was this.

ORESTES.

Does the right hand remonstrate with the will?
Does it make wherefores at its work? Were I
To bid thee, in this wretched woman's bosom,
Strike deep the irremediable dagger;
Art thou not bound to do't?

PYLADES.

Oh! my Orestes,
Put not upon me such a dreadful task.

ORESTES.

Thou wast too valiant in thy vow, Pylades!
Turn my Electra, turn thy head aside:
Thou hast not courage to behold the blow.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Strike! strike, at one, nor torture with delay,

ELECTRA.

O look, Orestes, where Egysthus lies,
Stiff'ning in death and clotted with his gore.
No more to him can our ill-fated mother
Relapse in fondness; spare her then to mourn
The woeful issue of her fatal passion;—
In piety for her contrition, spare.

ORESTES.

Thou hast assail'd me with a painful weapon.

PYLADES.

Yield! yield, Orestes, to this thaw of nature.

ORESTES.

Mother!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

O Gods!

ORESTES.

They wait the sacrifice.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh! fatal scion, of a fated stock,
Whose fruit has still been misery and crime;
Is't not enough that I am crimson deep,
With the brave blood of my heroic lord,
But that my own must curse my offspring too!
Hold! impious youth; in thy stern purpose, stay;

Think what a claim a parent may put in:
'Tis true that Agamemnon was thy sire;
But am not I thy mother, and may urge
As just a plea as the lamented dead.

ORESTES.

If thou hast on me that imperious claim,
Which tender mother's o'er their children hold,
Then set it forth as I recount to thee,
The duties that were thine. The bleating babe,
By mystic Nature, naked and defenceless,
Is to the mother's charities commended,
As much as by the conscious tie of birth.
What gentle office hast thou done for me?
Hast thou e'er follow'd, with thy hands outstretch'd,
In anxious joy upon my tott'ring childhood;
Watch'd the first glimpses of my opening mind;
And by a wide and all-surrounding love,
In soft refraction bent the rays on good?
Close as the general interposing air,
Is the true mother's anxious vigilance,
Around her child: but where was thine to me?
As to the bird the shell, thou wast my mother:
All cherish, watch, and gentle care were wanting;
And as a vile excrescence well remov'd,
I was cut off, and destined to destruction.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou speaking conscience, cease! upbraid no more.
If thou wilt spare me, Oh! in pity, cease.

Upon her knees, thy weeping mother see;
She craves for life, to spend that life in woe.

ORESTES.

Where was thy pity for my noble sire?
Where were thy tears when he before thee lay,
Slain victim to thy odious deity,
The rank Tisiphoné?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Alas! Orestes.—
Yawn thou firm earth, and give me room to hide
From this tremendous and avenging fiend.

ELECTRA.

Oh! to the temple, to the temple fly.

PYLADES.

Orestes, stay; thy kindling rage restrain.

ORESTES.

Away! weak girl. Dar'st thou Pylades too?—
Th' eclipse is full!—Who follows me shall die.

## SCENE VIII.

ELECTRA *and* PYLADES.

ELECTRA.

Oh! coward priests, will you not after him,
Nor save e'en your own altars from the stain?
Pylades too! canst thou stand shiv'ring here?—

O Gods! O Gods! Orestes!. Oh! my brother!
Rise! rise dread spirit of my father, rise!
And scare him from the crime. Egysthus! wake!
Hast thou no ghost to blaze upon his sight?
Oh! ye that rule the influential stars,
Strike down with palsy his uplifted arm!
Pylades! Oh Pylades!—Hark! hark! hark!

PYLADES.

'Tis but the solemn sounding of his tread.

ELECTRA.

Comes he yet back?

PYLADES.

Not yet.

ELECTRA.

What sounds are these?

PYLADES.

A wail and general lamentation spreads
Through all the city.

ELECTRA.

List.—Did you hear that?

ORESTES.

*On to the altar; to the altar straight!*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Murderer! matricide, forbear! forbear!*

ORESTES.

*The priest of Justice for his victim waits.*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

*Ho! you without; will no one help? Help! help!*

ORESTES.

*All now were vain.*

PYLADES.

O Heav'ns! she falls, she dies.—
'Tis past, Electra; see th' avenger comes,
With ghastly horror, and all grim with gore.

## SCENE IX.

ORESTES, ELECTRA, PYLADES, &c.

ORESTES.

Now it is done: and lo, the sun again
Emerges from the gloom. Softly around
Breaks forth a joyous universal hail;
Why then, Electra and Pylades dear,
Stand ye so mute, and look on me so strange?
Come, my sweet sister, let me lead thee hence.
We are two orphans, and in all the world,
Were never woeful orphans more forlorn.

ELECTRA.

Horrible sight! thy breast is foul with blood;
Thy mother's blood!—Release me awful man.

ORESTES.

What, my Pylades! where's thy gratulation?
Give me thy hand.

PYLADES.

Oh! what is this?

ORESTES.

My dagger!
Hence! blushing weapon.—Oh! could but the sight,
So soon, a sworn and sacred friendship sever!
Take her, Pylades, she has clung to thee.
'Tis I, 'tis I alone, that am the orphan.
But fare ye well; me no fond link detains;
I have the world's spacious range before.
Cast out in childhood from my mother's breast,
Fate from the birth, has destin'd me to be
This general denizen; then why should I,
At your amaz'd and chilling looks repine.
Friends! why is this? They shake their heads and sigh;
And, to the temple, gaze, with sad enchantment.
What see they there?—Pylades, save me! save me!
See! see! where o'er my bleeding mother's corse,
The snake-hair'd furies of perdition stand.
They come, they come, in flaming rage upon me!
Ha! Here too! Others! Whither shall I fly?

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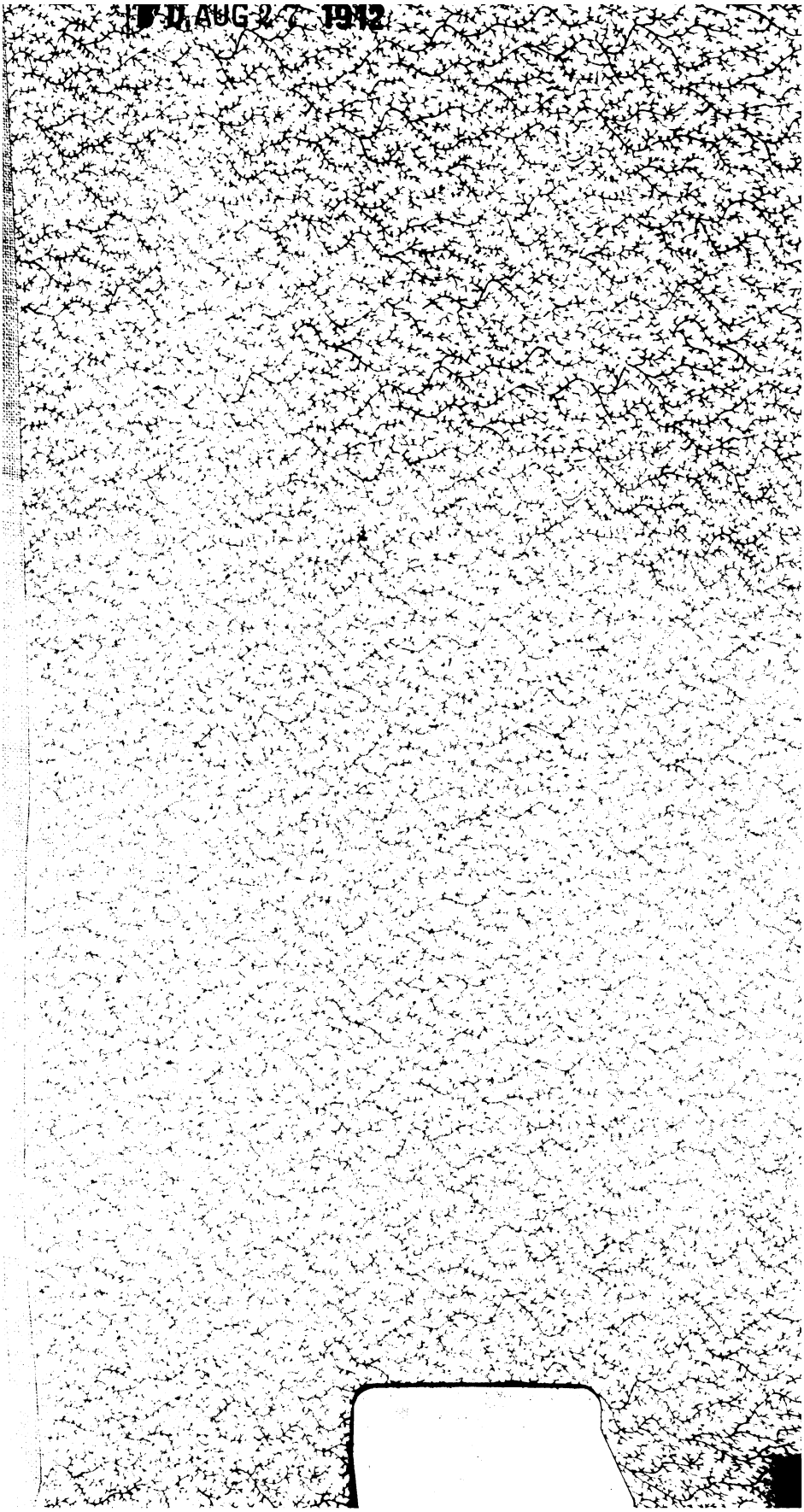
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